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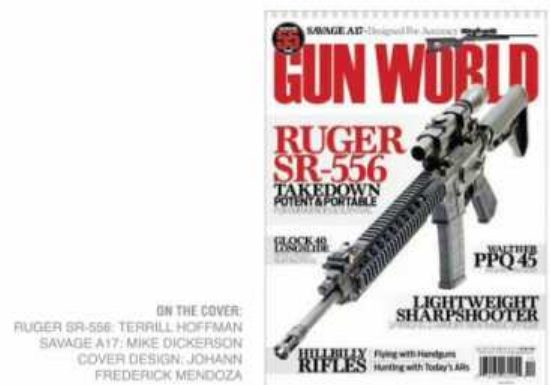
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GUN WORLD

Farewell, Frank James

► BY CRAIG HODGKINS

JUST AFTER OUR NOVEMBER issue went to press, we learned of the passing of Frank James, a popular gunwriter, columnist and broadcast personality as well as a proud resident of Wolcott, Indiana. Frank regularly appeared on outdoor television programs, and his byline appeared in a wide variety of publications, but we remember him best for his tenure as a member of the *Gun World* editorial team.

When I first met Frank, he told me that Jack Lewis, our founding editor, gave him his first assignment in this business, a piece on the 1989 Masters International Handgun Competition that appeared in our December 1989 issue. Jerry Miculek was among the winners that year, and the professional careers of both men were soon off and running.

His prolific writing consistently enriched this magazine in the 1990s—he earned the Anschutz Outstanding Writer of the Year award in 1994—until a personal tragedy caused him to step away for a season. On June 20, 1997, his 17-year-old daughter Valerie was killed in a traffic collision near their rural home.

Following the accident, Frank and his wife Cathy were both thankful for the sup-

port of their neighbors in their small farming community, but were overwhelmed by the outpouring of kindness they received from the shooting sports industry. When he returned to writing, he offered some of his thoughts in his first column, titled “A Fraternity.”

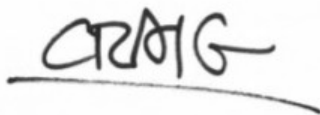
“For many weeks I played with the idea of never writing again,” he shared in July of 1998. “But those in the industry as well as the editors here at *Gun World* and other places were patient and unrelenting. When I was able, they wanted me back.

“For better or worse, for good or bad, this is what I do. I am a shooter and it wasn’t until the summer of 1997 that I realized how important the people of this industry and this discipline were to my well being.

“I miss the presence of my daughter every living minute of every day...but many of her close friends have come to me in the last few weeks to relate how proud she was that her Dad was a gunwriter.

“Therefore, I will continue,” he concluded. “This is what I do.”

Godspeed, Frank.



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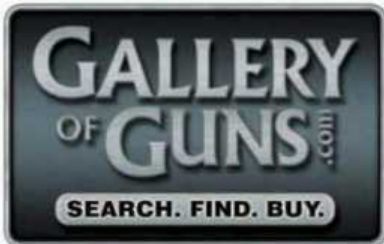
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RUGER

LC9S-KP

Item #: 3256
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: Fixed 3-Dot

Capacity: 7+1
BBL: 3.12"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Pontus Camo Frame
- Striker Fired
- Visual Chamber Inspection Port
- Magazine Disconnect

BERETTA

BU-9

Item #: SPEC0596A
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: 3-Dot

Capacity: 8+1 & 6+1
BBL: 3.07"



- Black Pronox Finish on Slide
- Purple Fiberglass Reinforced Technopolymer Frame
- Double Action Only
- Reversible Magazine Release

RUGER

LC9S-KN

Item #: 3255
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: Fixed 3-Dot

Capacity: 7+1
BBL: 3.12"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Neptune Camo Frame
- Striker Fired
- Visual Chamber Inspection Port
- Magazine Disconnect

RUGER

LC9S-MG

Item #: 3243-RUG
Caliber: 9MM
Sights: Fixed 3-Dot

Capacity: 7+1
BBL: 3.12"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Muddy Girl Camo Frame
- Striker Fired
- Visual Chamber Inspection Port
- Magazine Disconnect

RUGER

LCP

Item #: 3743
Caliber: 380
Sights: Fixed

Capacity: 6+1
BBL: 2.75"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Neptune Camo Frame
- Weighs 9.4oz

RUGER

LCP-MG

Item #: 3734
Caliber: 380
Sights: Fixed

Capacity: 6+1
BBL: 2.75"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Muddy Girl Camo Frame
- Weighs 9.4 oz

RUGER

22/45 Lite

Item #: 3910
Caliber: 22LR
Sights: Adjustable

Capacity: 10+1
BBL: 4.4"



- Red Anodize Finish
- Zytel Poly Grip Frame
- Loaded Chamber Indicator
- Replaceable 1911-Style Grip Panels
- Threaded Barrel

RUGER

LCP

Item #: 3744-RUG
Caliber: 380
Sights: Fixed

Capacity: 6+1
BBL: 2.75"



- Blue Finish on Slide
- Kryptek Pontus Camo Frame
- Weighs 9.4 oz

RUGER

22/45 Lite

Item #: 3909
Caliber: 22LR
Sights: Adjustable

Capacity: 10+1
BBL: 4.4"



- Black Anodize Finish
- Muddy Girl Camo Zytel Poly Grip Frame
- Loaded Chamber Indicator
- Replaceable 1911-Style Grip Panels
- Threaded Barrel

RUGER

SR22PB

Item #: 3618
Caliber: 22LR
Sights: Adjustable 3-Dot

Capacity: 10+1
BBL: 3.5"



- Muddy Girl Camo Slide
- Black Synthetic Frame
- Double Action
- Interchangeable Grip
- Loaded Chamber Indicator

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Shot Force Steel Targets

BECAUSE PRACTICE
DOESN'T HAVE TO BE BORING

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY TIM STETZER

All shooters have at least one thing in common: the need to practice. The standard method of shooting at paper serves a definite purpose, and is required to dial in your sights and hone your skill. But I have always preferred the positive reinforcement you receive from using steel targets.

As a police officer, I have witnessed the effects of steel target practice on a broad spectrum of shooters, including many who only shoot because it's a work requirement. Active shooters often prefer steel courses because they generally require movement and problem solving. More surprising were the comments I've heard from people who had always dreaded going to the range for qualification. They found that the immediate reinforcement of positive hits on steel gave them confidence and a sense of purpose in their training. That's a win-win for them and the department.

So, when it came time to help my 11-year-old son develop his shooting eye, I turned to steel. Fortunately, I met Steve Davis at an event, and he had just the thing with his new Shot Force target line.

SHOT FORCE TARGETS

Shot Force produces a variety of reactive steel targets to accommodate centerfire rifle and pistol cartridges as well as some rimfire-specific variants. Targets are all built of AR400 or AR500 steel plate, and feature a 15 to 20 degree forward cant to minimize any chance of ricochets and direct them into the

dirt if they do occur.

In addition to the distinct ring of steel that you'll hear with a hit, they also come with a resetting target paddle so you can spend more time shooting and less time setting things up.

I checked out the rimfire target selection on Shot Force's website, and chose a bowling

pin style target and a coyote. Both are constructed of 3/16-inch thick AR400 steel and come with a three-inch diameter paddle, which is basically an L-shaped piece of steel plate with a three-inch diameter circle on either end. When mounted to a bracket on the back of the target and connected to the provided spring, it gives an added depth to the



target beyond to add to the audible feedback of bullets on steel.

The circular cutout provides a smaller aiming point to engage the paddle. A successful hit on the three-inch circle flips the paddle so that the other three-inch circle becomes visible above the target. When you hit that one, the paddle flips back down once again, showing the circle in the target cutout. Repeat until you're out of ammunition.

Both targets run for \$149 direct from Shot Force and are backed by a one-year warranty. Replacement parts are also available from Shot Force for long term wear items like springs and bolts.

I requested the coyote target for my son as I thought he might find it a little more interesting than the bowling pin, and at 28 inches high and 15 inches wide it has a larger surface area. Weight is a reasonable 18 pounds; plenty heavy to remain sturdy while shooting but not so heavy that you're discouraged from throwing them in the car or truck when going to the range, or when you have to take them down range to set them up.

MAKING STEEL RING

My first test with the Shot Force coyote was with my son and a red dot equipped M&P 15-22. We placed the target out at 25 yards—Shot Force recommends at least 20 yards for best rimfire results—and I set about demonstrating the safe operation of the M&P.

I ran a magazine through the gun to show him how everything worked and to see what the Shot Force target would do. I was immediately rewarded with the ring of steel and quickly shifted from the body of the target to the three-inch paddles, and I had no issues flipping them back and forth with the remainder of the 25-round magazine.

After adjusting the stock for my son, I cut him loose, and he was soon sending rounds downrange. Once I recommended that he try the circular cutout on the body of the target, he started getting immediate hits, and I was pleasantly surprised at how often he was flipping the paddles on his own. He finished up his first magazine and looked up to ask if he could shoot some more.

Altogether, we fired a couple hundred rounds through the M&P that afternoon and the Shot Force coyote performed wonderfully. Mission accomplished.



Shot Force also offers a bowling pin design in their rimfire line of targets. It uses the same resetting paddle target arrangement as their coyote target. (Shot Force photo)



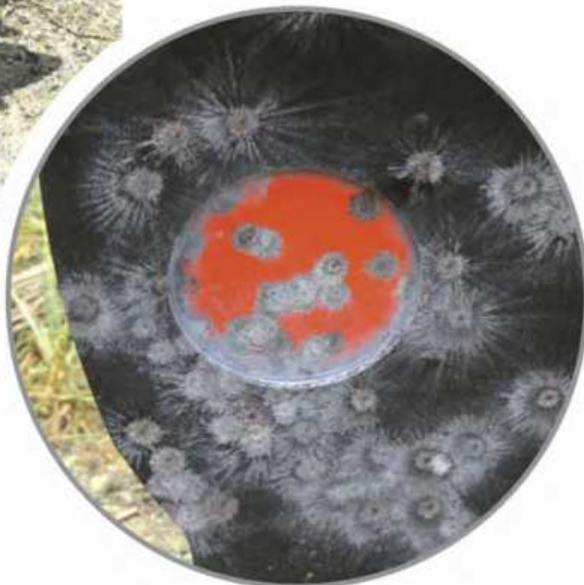
The circular targets are set at a 15-30 degree forward cant to minimize the chance of ricochets. The L-shaped dual end target paddle resets with each bullet strike. (Shot Force photo)



"THE CIRCULAR CUTOUT PROVIDES A SMALLER AIMING POINT TO ENGAGE THE PADDLE."



The 3/16-inch thick AR400 steel was unfazed by the steady hits from .22 LR rounds. You'll eventually have to touch up the paint after an accurate range day, but the target itself will last for a long time to come.



The three-inch paddle is cut out of the target, providing a greater challenge to the shooter than just banging the coyote's steel body.

In the upper position, it looks like the coyote is balancing a ball on its nose. Just shoot the ball to reset the target.

A FORCE TO BE RECKONED WITH

I had the target out a second time with a couple of my buddies on another range session. This time we were working with a Ruger SR-22 pistol, a Remington 597 semiauto and a Walther HK G-36 Rimfire Rifle, all chambered in .22 Long Rifle. Our range was 25 yards again, and between the three of us we kept up a steady string of fire on the poor coyote. The entertainment factor was

no less than it was for my eleven-year-old, and we had a very productive range session. The Shot Force target held up well to hundreds of rounds of .22 ammunition and didn't show any signs of wear other than the paint, which can be touched up as needed.

A number of companies produce quality steel targets, so if you're in the market for a little positive feedback at the range, I'd highly recommend giving Shot Force a look. **GW**

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TAKE

RUGER'S LATEST INCARNATION OF **THE SR-556**
IS PERFECT FOR EMERGENCIES & SURVIVAL



Sturm, Ruger's new SR-556 Takedown model is a rugged, reliable semi-auto sport-utility rifle whose time has definitely arrived.

DOWN!



► TEXT BY DAVE WORKMAN, PHOTOS BY TERILL HOFFMAN

STURM, RUGER & COMPANY'S latest incarnation of the SR-556 sport-utility rifle combines modern technology with ingenuity, and it's going to be hard for fans of the AR platform to resist. What's more, even though I've never pretended to be an AR aficionado, the SR-556 Takedown model impresses me, and that's saying something.

Some might argue that the SR-556 and its contemporaries are already "takedown" models because the upper and lower can be disassembled and stuck in a duffel bag. True enough, but this SR-556 takes an important extra step that I find rather practical, and it can be credited at least partly to my long-standing fascination with takedown rifles, particularly the Model 99 Savage and Model 1894 Winchester renditions, not to mention the Ruger 10/22 takedown model. It's an important design advantage for people who want a gun along when they don't

have a lot of space, and the same goes for storage problems.

A rifle that comes apart like this one can tuck easily into a bug-out bag, the trunk of a sedan, the cargo area of an SUV or behind the seat of a pickup truck. If you're a pilot flying over trackless terrain and need a survival rifle along, this one could definitely meet the requirement. The whole setup in three pieces fits into a rugged 22-inch nylon carrying case with interior pouches for the barrel assembly, the lower and the upper with handguard.

The package will hide in a closet or even a cabinet, and can either be carried with a shoulder strap or by a dual handle at one end of the bag, which zips from both ends. Pockets on the outside carry spare magazines and whatever else one might be able to fit, such as a flexible cleaning kit or a couple boxes of shells. If you had to grab and run, this new Takedown model would certainly meet that requirement.



Rear sight has two apertures and the author says it's a very user-friendly design.

A CLEVER DESIGN

Chambered for 5.56mm/.223 Remington, the SR-556 Takedown is a rather clever design, with a barrel that comes out quickly by the simple press of a latch at the front end of the tube where the barrel marries up to the handguard. You simply lock the bolt open, remove the magazine and make sure the chamber is clear, then rotate the barrel counter-clockwise and out it comes, locking tightly to the receiver with the additional advantage of returning everything to the same zero. To remove the barrel, simply press down on the latch and rotate it clockwise about a quarter-turn, and out it comes (again with the bolt locked open).

It's got a 16.1-inch chrome-lined barrel that's cold-hammer-forged from 41V45 chrome moly-vanadium steel cut with a 1:9-inch right hand twist. Now for the good part: There's a replacement barrel kit for the .300

AAC Blackout cartridge that's the same length but cut with a 1:7-inch twist. Take note that the 5.56mm barrel is tipped with a Ruger flash hider on a 1/2-28 threaded muzzle, while the .30-caliber replacement has a 5/8-24 threaded muzzle also fitted with a Ruger flash hider.

The rifle also features the Ruger Elite 452 two-stage trigger that comes factory-set at 4.5 pounds. In my estimation, this one breaks crisply with no discernible creep. Off a sandbag rest, one doesn't really "feel" anything, and out in the field, say against a coyote or some other predator, I doubt anybody will notice a thing.

FORM, FINISH & FUNCTION

My test model was fitted on the other end with a Magpul MOE collapsible buttstock that varies the length of pull from 11.1 to 14.4 inches with just a squeeze on a lever. In-

side is a mil-spec buffer tube. The lower receiver also features a textured grip for a firm hold even in wet weather.

The rifle comes with flip-up front and rear metallic sights. The rear sight has two apertures, small and large, and adjusts for windage, while the front post sight is adjustable for both windage and elevation. When the rifle is disassembled the front sight stays with the barrel, so it remains dialed in for that barrel's zero.

One feature that got my attention was the forward bolt assist. Some rifles of this genre have them while others don't, and I happen to think this is a very good thing to have whether one needs it or never does. The way things work with Murphy calling the shots, one never needs something until he doesn't have it.

Ruger designers incorporated a patent-pending chrome-plated two-stage piston



Controls are in the usual places, and the Ruger Elite 452 two-stage trigger breaks crisply with no discernible creep.



Ruger adds a flash suppressor on the front end.



Front post sight is adjustable for windage and elevation.

*"IT'S AN IMPORTANT DESIGN
ADVANTAGE FOR PEOPLE
WHO WANT A GUN ALONG
WHEN THEY DON'T HAVE A
LOT OF SPACE..."*





The SR-556 Takedown completely disassembled.

driven operating system, and it seems to cycle just fine, without a hitch.

There's something else that comes with the package that ought to earn Ruger a gold star. The SR-556 Takedown comes with a trio of 30-round Magpul PMAG magazines. They're synthetic, but tough as rawhide and certainly reliable.

The rifle weighs 7 pounds 10 ounces empty, and it will be heavier with an optic sight and/or other accessories that might include a laser and light. The quad rails have plenty of room for mounting these accessories, so the SR-556 Takedown can be tricked out for all kinds of tactical uses.

I've never been disappointed with the finish Ruger puts on its SR-556. This is the second or third of these rifles that I've evaluated over the past few years, and the finish on all of them has been tough and durable. Out here in my native Pacific Northwest, that is important because from one day to the next, one cannot count on the conditions, especially anytime between late September and June.

The controls on the SR-556 Takedown are the same as on any other standard AR-type rifle. Anybody familiar with this platform will need no adapting to this model.

If you put a scope on this rifle, make it a good one. Thanks to the rails, any medium to high Weaver-style ring should work depending upon the scope's objective bell diameter. I'm rather fond of the Grand Slam Lever-Lok, but there are so many rings available that work with such rails that it's really up to the individual shooter to choose.

On a rifle like this, however, I strongly recommend QD rings of some sort so that when the need arises, one can quickly revert to the metallic sights.

AT THE RANGE

Okay, we've gone all through the machinery, let's talk a little about actually shooting this beastie. With an overall weight of about 7 ½ pounds empty (more with a fully-loaded magazine), I'd have to judge recoil to be so light as to be nearly unnoticeable. It's been my experience that when shooting at live



||||| TAKEDOWN!

SPECIFICATIONS

Model: SR-556 Takedown

Manufacturer: Sturm, Ruger & Company

Type: Semi-auto

Caliber: 5.56mm/.223 Remington (Optional .300 AAC Blackout bbl.)

Capacity: 30

Barrel Length: 16.1 inches

Height: 7.75 inches

OAL: 32.75 – 36 inches

Width: 2.5 inches

Weight: 7.6 lbs.

Twist: 1:9 RH

Grooves: 6

Length of Pull: 11.1 - 14.4 inches

MSRP: **\$2,049.00**



game — and there isn't a coyote or prairie dog on the planet that is safe from the Takedown at reasonable ranges — you never really feel recoil, anyway.

I grabbed a few boxes of shells and headed for the range. Out of the box, I found that the rifle shot slightly low and to the right initially at the 25-meter mark, but a quick adjustment of the rear sight fixed that in a jiffy. Incidentally, the rear sight, in my humble opinion, is a dandy that gave me absolutely no trouble at all, and when I adjusted it, the point-of-impact did change noticeably. Note to Ruger engineers: Don't monkey with that sight design one bit, it works.

The trigger break felt a bit stiff at first, but after the first few rounds my digit got used to it and from then forward, it never bothered me a bit.

One thing I did notice was that there were traces of brass on the bolt assist housing, and the empties kicked pretty wide and to the rear. I was chasing spent cases ten to a dozen feet away between volleys, which ought to delight the AR folks who may worry about jams. Believe me, when this rifle goes "BANG!" that brass quickly becomes a memory and ejection is so affirmative that it leaves a mark on the rifle.

At the range, the author found recoil to be negligible and he was able to quickly adjust the sights.
(Dave Workman photo)



“THE RIFLE ALSO FEATURES THE RUGER ELITE 452 TWO-STAGE TRIGGER THAT COMES FACTORY-SET AT 4.5 POUNDS.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

As noted right up front, I’m no solid devotee of the AR platform. However, they are fun to shoot, and many models — including the new SR-556 Takedown — are delightfully accurate. For the modern sport-util-ity rifle fan, and for people who might one day be in a serious emergency situation, having this rifle tucked down behind a couch or car seat could mean the difference between survival and coming in, shall we say, “dead last.”

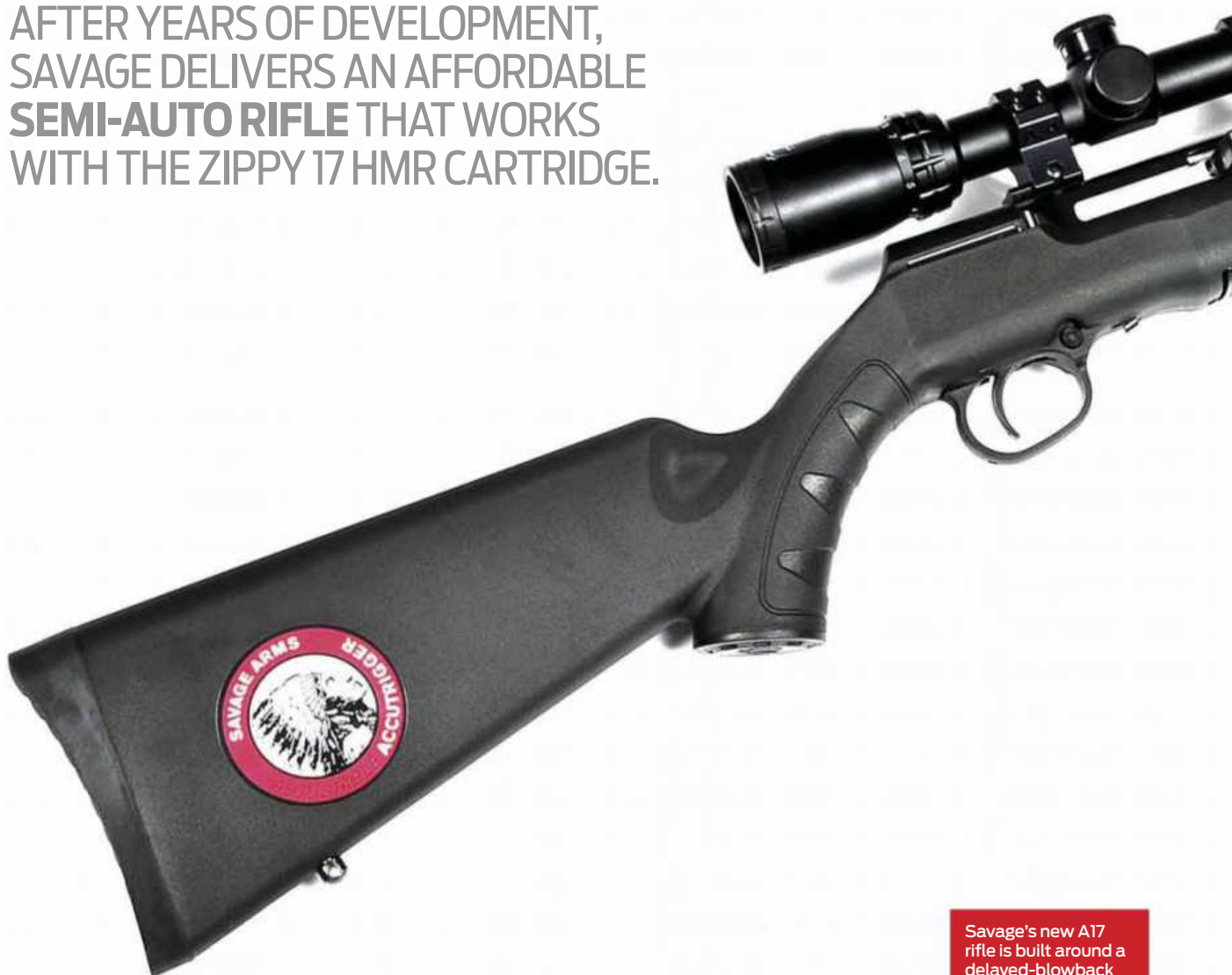
Now, for those who like to be in first place with a winner, the SR-556 Takedown might be the investment you’ve been waiting for. **GW**



Fully-assembled, Ruger’s SR-556 Takedown is a slick idea for bugging out, or merely to solve storage issues, and to have in a car trunk.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP

AFTER YEARS OF DEVELOPMENT,
SAVAGE DELIVERS AN AFFORDABLE
SEMI-AUTO RIFLE THAT WORKS
WITH THE ZIPPY 17 HMR CARTRIDGE.



Savage's new A17 rifle is built around a delayed-blowback action, which allows the gun to safely and reliably handle the energy of the 17 HMR cartridge. The rifle measures 42 in. overall and weighs just 5.41 lbs.



► TEXT & PHOTOS BY MIKE DICKERSON

WHEN THE DIMINUTIVE-BUT-SPEEDY 17 HMR cartridge was introduced to the world by Hornady in 2002, it was nothing less than a revolution in rimfire ammo. Wildcatters had played with some similar rounds long ago, and although the 5mm Rem. Mag. Rimfire made its commercial debut in the early 1970s, that round died a relatively quick and quiet death.

The 17 HMR, however, has been an unqualified success.

Made by necking down a 22 Winchester Magnum Rimfire case to take small 17 caliber bullets, the cartridge accelerates these little bullets, most commonly weighing 17 grains, to speeds in excess of 2,700 fps. The round's speed, combined with the inherent accuracy of V-MAX-type bullets, pushed the envelope on effective rimfire-ammo range. Sub-MOA groups at 100 yards were common out of good bolt action rifles when the wind

wasn't blowing too hard, and the cartridge proved to be a great little round for rabbits, squirrels, varmints and small predators at reasonable ranges.

In those early years with the cartridge, I found myself spending an inordinate amount of time with a 17 HMR bolt-action rifle diminishing ground squirrel infestations in crop fields at ranges up to 140 yards or so. Due to a near-total lack of recoil, you could easily watch impacts through your scope. Instead of blowing up, as they normally do when hit with high-speed centerfire varmint rounds, the ground squirrels just sort of stiffened and fell over like bad guys in an old B-Western movie. It was vastly entertaining, and beneficial to the farmer.

While the 17 HMR did this and many other things well, there was one thing it didn't do well at all. It could not be made to function safely and reliably in a semi-auto rifle – until now.

In short, the Savage A17 and the 17 HMR make a powerful partnership.

A NOVEL APPROACH

The challenge with blowback-operated rimfire semi-autos was that they just couldn't handle the high energy of the 17 HMR. A traditional approach to semi-auto actions for magnum rimfires has been to make the bolt heavier and add a stiffer recoil spring, but that didn't seem to work with the 17 HMR. Because the powder used in the cartridge produces longer periods of peak pressure than other rimfire rounds, traditional blowback-operated bolts would open before peak pressure had passed. This could, in some cases, result in a ruptured case and send hot gas and burning powder back at the shooter. At least one manufacturer who tried to make a semi-auto rifle for the round had to recall the model entirely.

Engineers at Savage Arms started trying to create a workable semi-auto rifle for 17 HMR quite some time ago. The effort took seven years, but they finally came up with an innovative way to make the 17 HMR cycle reliably

and safely in a semi-auto platform. The result is the new Savage A17 rifle, which utilizes a unique delayed-blowback recoil operation.

The novel design utilizes an interrupter lug, which locks down the bolt until peak pressure has passed as a bullet leaves the barrel. The bolt opens at this point, ejecting an empty case and loading a new round. This all happens very quickly, and the difference is imperceptible to the shooter. The delayed-blowback system has the added advantage of serving as a firing-pin block to prevent out-of-battery firing when the action is open.

Since Savage is now part of the Vista Outdoor family, the company's engineers teamed up with sister company CCI to produce a new, hotter 17 HMR round optimized to function with the delayed-blowback system. CCI's new A17 Varmint Tip ammunition is advertised to run 100 fps faster than existing 17 HMR rounds, although Savage says the rifle can accommodate other 17 HMR loads. I'll let you know how those claims stood up

to testing shortly, but it's important to note that the package – rifle, ammo and a Bushnell scope – can be purchased as a complete shooting system. That will appeal to those who don't want to take the time to select, buy and mount their own scope or experiment with different loads.

As a certifiable rifle looney, I prefer to do those things myself, but this time I went ahead and tested the rifle with the scope it came with, a Bushnell Banner 3.5-10x36mm scope with Dusk & Dawn Optics and a parallax-adjustable objective lens. This scope is designed specifically for 17 HMR and 22 rimfire rifles, and comes with replaceable bullet drop compensator (BDC) turrets. As shipped from the factory, the rifle comes with scope bases already installed.

DESIGNED FOR ACCURACY

When you take a close look at the A17, it's clear that Savage set out to make the gun accurate from the beginning. The 22-inch but-

*"THE 22-INCH BUTTON-RIFLED,
BLUED BARREL IS FREE-FLOATED
ALONG ITS ENTIRE LENGTH."*



The A17 is sold as a package with a Bushnell Banner scope designed for 17 HMR and 22 rimfire rifles.

ton-rifled, blued barrel is free-floated along its entire length. It uses the same barrel nut/thread-in barrel headspacing arrangement that contributes to the notable out-of-the-box accuracy of Savage centerfire rifles.

The A17's receiver is case-hardened. Inside rides the hard-chromed, stabilized bolt and the interrupter lug which controls the timing of the action. Upon first glance at the owner's manual, takedown for cleaning appears to be more complicated than it actually is. You simply insert a small punch through a hole in the rear of the dust cover and push the recoil assembly forward and upward. Then lift off the dust cover and remove the recoil assembly. Pull the charging handle out of its retaining slots and remove the bolt, and you now have access to clean the barrel from the breech. The trickiest part is snapping the dust cover back into place when you have a scope installed. This gets easier after you do it a couple of times.

Controls on the gun are well thought out and well placed. The charging handle is oversized and easy to operate. The bolt does not lock open upon firing the last round, but there's a manual bolt lock on the bottom of the stock just forward of the trigger guard. I like this feature, for I have a positive allergy to semi-auto guns that don't come with a mechanism to lock the bolt open. In addition to the safety incorporated into the AccuTrigger, the rifle has a crossbolt safety button located at the forward end of the trigger guard. This arrangement results in a dual safety, blocking both the hammer and the trigger.

When I first pulled on the A17's AccuTrigger I was surprised by its heavy pull weight, which I guessed to be somewhere north of 5 lbs. Happily, I was able to adjust it down, with the supplied tool, to the minimum setting where it broke at an average measured weight of 2 lbs. 13 oz. That was good news, for an overly heavy trigger pull will adversely impact accuracy in any rifle, let alone one that weighs a mere 5.41 lbs. and can be shoved around by a light breeze. The design lets you adjust the trigger by inserting a factory-provided tool through a hole in the trigger guard, so you don't have to remove the action from the stock.

The rifle feeds from a 10-round ro-



An oversized charging handle makes it easy to chamber a round, even when wearing gloves.

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This view of the grip areas of the stock shows texturing designed to improve handling in inclement weather.



The grip of the A17 stock is adorned with the Savage Arms symbol.



The barrel is free-floated over its entire length in the synthetic stock.

tary magazine that sits flush with the bottom of the stock. Rimmed cartridges can be problematic when stacked atop one another in a traditional magazine, but in a rotary magazine they rest in their own slot, which makes it a great system for reliably feeding rimfire ammo. I found that you have to exercise care to ensure the magazine snaps firmly into place. Simply shoving the magazine into the stock may not fully seat it. You typically need to apply some pressure to the forward edge of the magazine's bottom to ensure the latch engages. When it does engage, you should both feel and hear the magazine latch snap into place.

I found the magazines to be a bit tight and resistant to loading, but with a little experimentation I found the sweet spot to apply downward pressure and slide each round into the magazine. I suspect the magazines will loosen up a little more with use.

The matte black synthetic stock feels a little "plastic-y" to me, but that's to be expected in a gun in this price range. The stock does, however, have three raised panels on the forend, with grooves in between, to help improve grip in inclement weather. The grip area also has a textured treatment to improve handling when wet. The stock comes with a



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*"THE NEW SAVAGE
A17 RIFLE...UTILIZES
A UNIQUE DELAYED-
BLOWBACK RECOIL
OPERATION."*



Detachable rotary magazines fit flush with the bottom of the stock.



Detachable rotary magazines hold 10 rounds.

soft rubber buttpad installed, further reducing an already negligible amount of recoil. Sling swivels are already installed, and you can attach a bipod to the forward swivel if you so desire.

MOA PERFORMANCE

Semi-auto rimfire rifles can be notoriously finicky about ammo, but I experienced zero issues with three of four tested factory loads. The rifle fed, fired and ejected flawlessly with the CCI load and two Hornady

rounds. To further test reliability, I deliberately sent about 300 rounds downrange without stopping to clean the gun. The gun never sputtered with these three loads. The magazine dropped out of the bottom of the stock on one occasion, but that was because I had neglected to click it firmly into place. Lesson learned, I went back to work and never experienced that issue again with either of the two supplied rotary magazines. The rifle did have some issues with Winchester's 17-grain Varmint HV load. During accuracy testing I

experienced four failures to feed from the magazine. In each case, it was the second load in the magazine that failed to feed. That round was the slowest of three tested 17-grain loads, by 103 fps, so it's possible the round wasn't powerful enough to fully cycle the bolt. Upon close examination, I also noticed that the rims on the cases were visibly thicker than those on the other factory loads.

Thanks to the rifle's 22-inch barrel, all four tested loads beat factory-stated velocities out of the A17. The hottest load tested, as expected, was CCI's A17 17-grain Varmint Tip bullet, which has been optimized for use with the A17 rifle and is advertised as being 100 fps faster than other 17 HMR loads. That round clocked in at 2,797 fps, or 147 fps faster than factory-claimed velocity. It was

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guarantee at 50 yards?
Right out of the box?
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POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP

SPECIFICATIONS

SAVAGE A17 RIFLE IN 17 HMR

Action: Semi-auto, delayed blowback
Caliber: 17 HMR
Barrel: 22-in. button-rifled carbon steel
Stock: Matte black synthetic
Trigger: AccuTrigger
Sights: Drilled and tapped
 Scope mount installed
Weight: 5.41 lbs.
Length: 42 in.
Capacity: 10-round rotary magazine

MSRP: \$465.00



SAVAGE ARMS A17 IN 17 HMR

LOAD	AVG. MUZZLE VELOCITY (FPS)	AVG. 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)	BEST 100-YARD GROUP (INCHES)
CCI A17 17 HMR 17-gr. Varmint Tip	2797	0.85	0.47
Hornady 17 HMR 17-gr. V-MAX	2701	1.11	0.69
Hornady 17 HMR 20-gr. XTP	2549	1.41	1.07
Winchester 17 HMR 17-gr. Varmint HV	2598	1.16	1.02

Note: Velocities measured with Competitive Edge Dynamics M2 chronograph.
 All groups fired in wind 1-8 mph.



Thanks to the rifle's 22-in. barrel, measured velocities of all tested ammunition exceeded factory-claimed velocities.

"THE RIFLE FED, FIRED AND EJECTED FLAWLESSLY WITH THE CCI LOAD AND TWO HORNADY ROUNDS."

also nearly 100 fps faster than the nearest competitor, Hornady's 17-grain V-MAX load, which zipped along at an average of 2,701 fps (151 fps faster than the factory number).

Hornady's heavier 20-grain XTP bullet ran slower at 2,549 fps, but it was still an attention-getting 174 fps faster than factory-stated velocity. At 2,598 fps, Winchester's 17-grain Varmint HV bullet topped factory-claimed velocity by 48 fps but, as noted, had issues cycling reliably in the A17.

As for accuracy, the rifle seemed to prefer the lighter 17-grain bullets over the single 20-grain load included in testing. The CCI A17 load was not only the fastest load tested, but took top accuracy honors with average

groups of 0.85 in. and a single best group of 0.47 in. Hornady's 17-grain V-MAX load wasn't far behind, with a best group of 0.69 in. and average groups measuring slightly over an inch.

With ammo it likes, the A17 is clearly capable of sub-MOA accuracy. To put this performance in perspective, the average size of all best groups was just 0.81 in. and the combined average size of all groups was 1.13 in. While that's slightly over minute of angle, it's definitely minute of squirrel or rabbit.

With a rimfire rifle that shoots this well at 100 yards as fast as you can pull the trigger, and an MSRP of only \$465.00, what more could you ask for? **GW**

CONTACT

Bushnell
Bushnell.com

CCI Ammunition
CCI-Ammunition.com

Competitive Edge Dynamics
CEDhk.com

Hornady Ammunition
Hornady.com

Nagel's Gun Shop
NagelsGuns.net

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THE NEW RANGE OFFICER CHAMPION, A RELIABLE AND ACCURATE CARRY OPTION

TEXT & PHOTOS BY GARRETT LUCAS

WHEN IT COMES TO FIREARMS, I am—in the words of gun writer Robert Shimek—a child of the “Wonder Nine” generation. In the era when I began to read and learn about handguns, the military, police departments and consumers seemed anxious to leave the past behind and jump on the high-capacity 9mm bandwagon.

Not only was this a paradigm shift for professionals still primarily relying on revolvers for their work, it was also a transition period bridging the gap to the next phase of latest-generation technologies and materials, or more specifically, polymer-framed and striker-fired pistols. Now, many pistols incorporate both technological advances.

Maybe I’m a little old-fashioned, but I still get a bit nostalgic for the feel of metal in my hand—to heck with the weight. I want that tangible, more substantial contact with the implement of my defense. Steel is nice, but aluminum will also do just fine in a pinch. I’m at the stage where what’s old is new again, at least for me, and I doubt I’m alone in my thinking.

That’s why, when I saw Springfield Armory’s new Range Officer Champion, I got in touch with the factory and had them send one for review muy pronto!





The Range Officer Champion has a Commander-size aluminum alloy frame with a four-inch barrel.



The Range Officer Champion does not use a standard GI recoil spring and bushing. Instead, it uses a bull barrel and a dual recoil spring assembly that adds weight to the front and helps mitigate felt recoil.

AN IMPOSING COMMANDER

With tens of thousands of articles dedicated to the myriad number of 1911 handguns during the last century, and more appearing every day, I doubt there's anything I can add to the discussion regarding its history, various iterations, and general talking points, and I think that's a good thing. So instead of wading through all the hyperbole, I'll get right to the task at hand.

The Range Officer Champion (ROC) is one of Springfield Armory's latest offerings. It has a four-inch barrel and a Commander-size frame that's built for full size magazines. Additionally, the frame is constructed of an aluminum alloy rather than steel. This results in a light overall weight of 30 ounces and, in concert with the shorter barrel, makes for a package that's easier to conceal and carry for extended periods of time.

Extra touches that elevate this model include a fiber optic front sight with low profile combat sights, beautiful cocobolo grip slabs, and a fully supported, hammer-forged ramp bull barrel. Additionally, an extended lightweight trigger is included, and with just the slightest hint of travel, the trigger breaks

crisply at 3.75 pounds.

Something else that Springfield has started doing, in addition to including a couple of magazines, is offering an entire package that the shooter can immediately take to the range to get real-world practice carrying the pistol and the magazines.

Along with the cleaning brush and a small packet of tools, both a holster and a magazine carrier—ironically in polymer—are included. This is in addition to the high quality carrying case that contains everything. There are a couple of other manufacturers that do something similar, but Springfield's add-ons, in my opinion, seem to be of the best quality overall.

It's nice having these accessories available out of the box for practice until the user decides which accessories they want to use permanently. It's also a great bonus for the less serious shooter who's primarily looking for a home defense weapon but may go to the range from time to time.

My concealed carry firearm is often one that can be set in the cocked and locked position, so that style of carry doesn't really bother me with the 1911. The one doubt

that's always stayed fast in my mind over the years, however, has been my opinion that 1911s out of the box aren't as reliable with modern hollowpoint ammunition as other available .45 ACP pistols.

Having owned a couple the past twenty years, and having dealt with a few issues, I've just developed that opinion, though I'm not claiming it as fact. I've always loved the aesthetics and the shooting mechanics of the 1911 style pistol, but I've always felt that I would have to spend a lot of money to get one that I truly trusted.

That's why I decided to throw everything I had at the Range Officer Champion during this review. Before I settled into the accuracy testing and measuring bullet velocities, I wanted to run whatever I could find through the ROC to see how long it would take before my beliefs were vindicated, or to see if I wanted back in the 1911 game.

SO IT BEGINS

The folks at Winchester shared a few different types of ammunition for this review, including products from their line of .45 ACP Train and Defend Ammunition, and

*"I STILL GET A BIT NOSTALGIC FOR THE FEEL OF STEEL
IN MY HAND—TO HECK WITH THE WEIGHT."*



The lighter overall weight and the shorter barrel create a package that's easier to conceal and carry for extended periods of time.



The Champion sports an extended lightweight trigger that breaks cleanly at 3.75 pounds.

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Though the barrel is one inch, the standard frame height is maintained to use full size, 7-round magazines.

their Supreme Elite Bonded PDX1 in .45 ACP. The latter is the primary service cartridge for the FBI, so I couldn't help getting my hopes up a bit regarding its reliability and accuracy.

To add a little spice to the mix, I threw in quite a variety of my own .45 rounds including three boxes of Winchester White Box to start it off, and an eclectic mix of about two hundred stray rounds I've been collecting in Tupperware containers for the last twenty years.

There was everything from old Hydra-Shoks and Golden Sabers to some +P 185-grain Cor-Bon rounds from when they were fairly new to the market. I still had six Black Talon rounds in one container, and threw those in the pile as well. I only wish I still had some of those flying ashtrays lying around just for curiosity's sake.

Between the ammunition provided by Winchester and what I added to the mix, the Range Officer Champion initially digested more than 350 rounds of ammunition without a single malfunction. I harrumphed like an old geezer watching children walk through his front yard and pulled out a box of Federal 230-grain +P HST. I threw that at the Springfield and got the same results. I was done at that point. I'd spent enough money for the day.



Springfield presents the ROC to the buyer in a nice complete package that includes a cleaning brush and spare magazine, a polymer holster, magazine carrier, and an elegant carrying case for the pistol and its accessories.

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Though it appears to be a standard 1911, the Springfield Range Officer Champion includes a few extra touches to make it stand out from the crowd, one of which is the fiber optic front sight.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

Despite the alloy frame, the recoil of the ROC was easily manageable, even with the hot and fast +P loads. Part of the reason for that is the additional mass of the bull barrel, instead of a standard barrel, as the Champion does not make use of a bushing. This adds a bit of weight to the front to help mitigate recoil. While there was a noticeable difference in the recoil between low pressure and +P loads, nothing even came close to being uncomfortable or uncontrollable. Like any 1911, it pointed well and just felt right

when I was shooting it.

The fiber optic front sight was very easy to pick up, and helped make target acquisition so much easier to attain. The Range Officer Champion shot true to the point of aim, more or less, depending on the load, and the supplied magazines functioned flawlessly throughout the session.

PHASE TWO

With my reliability requirements met, the next trip to the range was all about shooting for accuracy, and to get some good velocity

data as well. There aren't many companies out there with Springfield's experience building 1911s, so I expected decent accuracy results, but I ended up being floored by a couple of the groups the Range Officer Champion brought home.

Let me massage that declaration a little bit. For some reason or other, I couldn't break the 2.5-inch barrier whether I was at 15 yards or 25 yards, and I was shooting from a bench! However, there were patterns in the groups that made me believe the issue was mine and not the gun's. As the results



The included holster for the ROC is of the paddle variety and provides a secure hold on the firearm, staying firmly in place during the draw. It's an excellent tool for those who are just learning to carry and still deciding what style of carry they prefer.

started appearing, it was apparent that the Springfield really liked the supply of Winchester ammunition I was feeding it, and it offered a little love in return, as we'll discuss in a little while.

Winchester's Train and Defend is to provide shooters with practice ammunition similar to their defense/carry ammunition in terms of bullet size, bullet shape and amount of recoil. In fact, the Train and Defend rounds have lower pressure levels than normal to allow new shooters to acclimate to defensive shooting more easily.

In reviewing the velocity data, however, it seemed that my readings were a bit lower for the Winchester products, despite the fact that my chronograph was set at 10 feet versus the 5 yards Winchester specified on its website for the Train and Defend ammunition.

I had shot a few of the training rounds during the previous session, and I noticed there was definitely less felt recoil than a standard ACP round. Other than the lower recoil, they shot pretty much like Winchester White Box as far as accuracy is

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On a beautiful day, it's a tough choice between being in the office or out on the range, but the satisfying results of the Range Officer Champion with the Winchester ammunition made the sacrifice worthwhile.

Lightweight Sharpshooter



SPECIFICATIONS SPRINGFIELD ARMORY RANGE OFFICER CHAMPION

Caliber: .45 ACP
Height: 5.5 inches
Overall Length: 7.6 inches
Barrel: Match Grade, Forged 4-inch Bull
Weight: 30 ounces (Empty Magazine)
Slide: Forged Steel
Frame: Forged Lightweight Alloy
Recoil System: Dual Spring, Full Length Guide Rod
Sights: Fiber Optic Front Sight, Low Profile Combat Rear Sight
Finish: Parkerized
Grip Panels: Double Diamond Cocobolo Cross Cannon Logo
Magazines: (2) 7-Round, Blued Steel

MSRP: \$899

Range Officer Champion Results

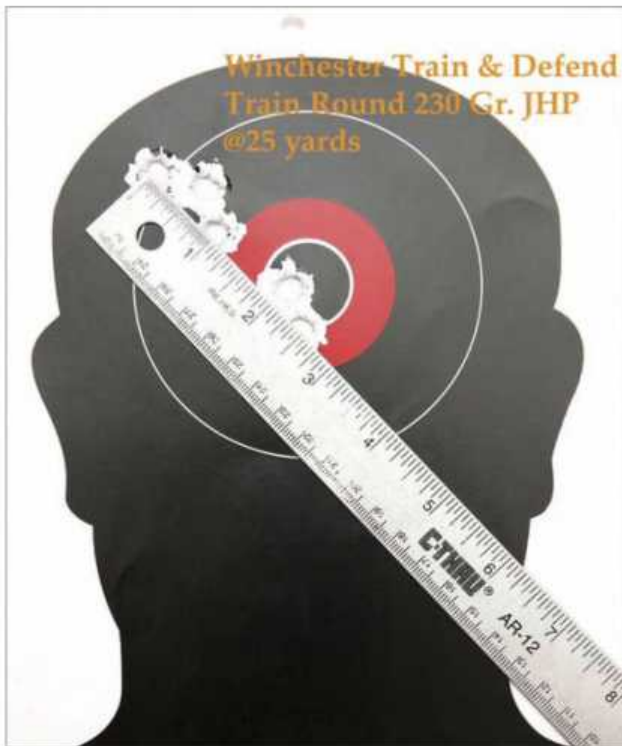
Ammunition Type	My Results	Winchester's Results
T&D 230-gr. FMK Train	813 fps (10 ft.)	847 fps (5 yds.)
T&D 230-gr. JHP Defend	814 fps (10 ft.)	847 fps (5 yds.)

CONTACT

Springfield Armory
 (800) 680-6866
Springfield-Armory.com

Winchester Ammunition
Winchester.com

Thompson Target
 (330) 699-8000
ThompsonTarget.com



The best group of the day from Winchester's premium "Defense" rounds in their Train and Defend line was 2.5 inches at 25 yards from a rest.



The supplied magazine carrier performed much better than anticipated, providing snug retention of the magazines during both routine carry and more rigorous practice on the range.

concerned. The best five-shot group I achieved with it at 15 yards was 2.5 inches from the bench.

EUREKA!

After that test, things got really interesting. I moved up to the premium rounds and shot several five-shot groups of both the Defend JHP rounds and the Supreme Elite Bonded PDX1 rounds. I tested both of these for accuracy at 25 yards and the best group I got for each of the loads was, you guessed it, 2.5 inches.

Comparing the targets of the two premium loads, there's a difference in the patterns that tell something of a story. The holes for the 230-grain Train rounds appear to walk a line across the entire 2.5-inch spread. A couple of holes are tight here and there, but there's a decent amount of deviation between the shots.

In contrast, the best group the Range Officer Champion shot with the Winchester PDX1 put four holes into .75 inches with one flyer opening the group up to 2.5 inches. Yes, yes, it's still a 2.5-inch group, but there was a human factor involved, particularly this

human (and I'm no deadeye), so I'm figuring the x-factor was me.

Maybe my eyes gave out, my hold shifted slightly, or I zigged when I should have zagged. Who knows? I wasn't thinking about the flyer. I just got excited about the fact that four of five shots went into .75 inches at 25 yards! That is one of those moments that remind me, with today's technology, most guns will outshoot the shooter.

THE VERDICT

So, what do I think? I do believe I achieved reconciliation under a late summer sky in the Ohio River valley. I can't say whether I was more impressed with the accuracy of the Range Officer Champion with the premium Winchester ammunition, or the fact that that it shot more than 600 rounds over a two-day period, including every oddball round I could find, without a single misstep.

I guess that was finally my come-to-Jesus meeting with a production 1911 pistol, and I may have seen the light. It definitely meets my requirements for a pistol that feels substantial and more connected to our heritage

"IT HAS A FOUR-INCH BARREL AND A COMMANDER-SIZE FRAME THAT'S BUILT FOR FULL SIZE MAGAZINES."

as descendants of makers and users of tools. Not to get too abstract here, but it simply feels more personal and satisfying than some models produced today.

Considering the MSRP is only \$899, the performance of the Springfield Armory Range Officer Champion definitely burst the bubble of my theory that only a \$2000 1911 would be a viable option for carry and defense. With its four-inch barrel, lightweight frame, and excellent trigger pull, it's made to be a defender that rides on your hip all day, and it'll rise to the occasion when duty calls its name. **GW**

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NC Tool Knifemaker Forge

Equipped with insulated doors on both ends for easy entry and removal of Damascus billets. Comes fitted for propane, but can be configured for natural gas. Regulator and Hose included, operates off a standard 20lb propane tank, the same type used for barbecue grills. Reaches 2350°. The heat Chamber is 4" x 4 1/2" x 13 1/2". Exhaust port on one door is 3" x 2". Ship weight is 48 lbs. **Actual shipping charges.**



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
NC111	Knifemaker Forge	559.95

NC Tool Anvil



Quality alloyed castings, our 70 lb. anvil is precision milled and heat treated. A 3 1/2" x 11" face and 4" x 8" horn. Perfect for forging Damascus. **Actual shipping charges.**

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
NC207	Forging Anvil	274.95

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Forging hammers are perfectly balanced. One end round, crowned face, other is flat and beveled to reduce the possibility of chipping.

Heat treating tongs are manufactured from special low carbon steel for lasting strength. Will not become brittle when quenched in water.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
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KF901	15" Tongs	39.95



Equipped with a simple to master SENTRY 12 key electronic temperature controller. Controls heating and cooling with accuracy and repeatability. Store up to 4 programs in memory, one for each type of steel you regularly treat. Maximum temp is 2300°. KF524 is 240 volt, 7.5 amp, 1800 watts, 5.5" wide and 4.5" high. All dimensions are inside chamber measurements. **Actual shipping charges apply. Allow 14 days for shipping.**



CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
KF524	24" Paragon Oven	1340.00

Heat Treating Foil



Simple to use; place blade or other part in the Tool Steep Wrap; fold over and crimp edges forming an air tight package; place package in oven and heat treat according to metal directions. Place a small chip of wood inside the foil packet to help burn up oxygen inside the wrap. Use only once. Cuts easily with scissors. Size .002" x 12" x 25'.

CAT.#	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
KF321	1900° 321 Foil	47.95
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ChevronTexaco 70 Quench Oil



Premium quenching oil designed to provide controlled cooling of steel. When quenching is started, Chevron Quenching Oil 70 provides a high initial cooling rate inducing maximum hardness, yet once the critical transformation temperature is passed, the ideal fluid cooling rate decreases to eliminate the possibility of stresses and metal distortion. This highly stable oil resists the oxidizing effects of quenching and is less sensitive to the effects of agitation. It is highly heat resistant.

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Blaze belts are the next generation of Ceramic belts for metal removal. Lasts 200% longer on hard-to-grind materials and alloys. Cuts faster and cooler, with less pressure, than any other ceramic belt.



CAT.#	SIZE	GRIT	PRICE
NA72036	2" x 72"	36	12.50
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NA72060	2" x 72"	60	9.95
NA72080	2" x 72"	80	9.95
NA72120	2" x 72"	120	9.25
NA72220	2" x 72"	220	8.50



J-Flex belts are very flexible and made of aluminum oxide. Great on contoured workpieces. Use on your stainless and high alloy steels as well as on all ferrous and non-ferrous metals. The semi-open coated material is resin bonded with a special gold colored top coating to aid in cooling and to resist loading.

CAT.#	SIZE	GRIT	PRICE
KS080	2" x 72"	80	5.95
KS100	2" x 72"	120	5.95
KS101	2" x 72"	180	5.95
KS102	2" x 72"	220	5.95
KS103	2" x 72"	320	5.95
KS104	2" x 72"	400	5.95



Scotch Brite belts are ideal for cleaning, deburring, blending tool marks and removing surface imperfections quickly and easily. Create a very nice satin finished scratch pattern on your blades and other metal parts with these belts.

Very Fine = 400-600 grit
Super Fine = 800-1,000 grit.

CAT.#	SIZE	GRIT	PRICE
IB72VF	2" x 72"	Very Fine	24.95
IB72SF	2" x 72"	Super Fine	27.95

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Long-Awaited Longslide

THE **GLOCK MODEL 40** IS AN OPTICS-READY, WILDERNESS-WORTHY HUNTING PISTOL



► TEXT BY STEVEN PAUL BARLOW, PHOTOS BY TERRILL HOFFMAN

I've hunted with handguns for many years, but all of them were long-barreled revolvers. There were excellent single-shot pistols available, but not much in the way of semi-autos, unless I opted for the mammoth Desert Eagle or a pricey long-slide 1911.

I have also carried Glock pistols for quite some time. For the last 22 years of my 27 years as a police officer, a Glock – either the Model

17 or Model 37 – was the issued weapon in my duty holster.

Now, with the introduction of the Glock Model 40 optics-ready, long-slide 10mm pistol, I have a legitimate semi-auto option to serve as a primary arm for hunting deer-sized game, one with which I'm extremely familiar and comfortable. To be fair, I've often carried a Glock 20SF 10mm afield while hunting, but it was usually as a secondary arm to a rifle or shotgun.



The introduction of the Glock Model 40 optics-ready, long-slide 10mm pistol offers shooters a legitimate semi-auto option for deer-sized game.



The camera angle accentuates the 6.02-inch barrel length of the new Glock Model 40 in 10mm.

OUTDOOR ADVANTAGES

The same features that make Glock pistols so desirable for military and law enforcement applications make the Glock 40 equally attractive for hunting.

The pistol is a lightweight compared to other hunting handguns. Unloaded, the G40 weighs a mere 28.15 ounces. By comparison, my favorite Ruger Super Blackhawk weighs 48 ounces.

With its polymer frame and treated metal parts (Glock no longer uses the brand name Tenifer in its literature), it's extremely weather resistant. It is durable, reliable and simple to operate. There's no manual safety lever or external hammer to make an alarming "click" and spook your game.

In the embarrassing event that you take a spill in the mud – something I've experienced, unfortunately – the gun can be field-stripped and cleaned very easily.

The pistol's high magazine capacity of 15 (10 in restricted states) might not seem like a necessary feature in a pure hunting situation, but it adds to the gun's usefulness as a survival tool for those who enjoy wilderness hunting or backpacking.

DOUBLETAP AMMO'S HUNTING LOADS

A hunting handgun is only as good as the ammunition that you fire from it. Fortunately, several companies offer excellent 10mm loads.

Doubletap offers three 10mm loads specifically for hunting, including 180- and 200-grain JHP controlled expansion loads and a 200-grain hardcast solid, which should provide good penetration on dangerous game.

Hornady offers its excellent XTP jacketed hollowpoint in both 180 and 200 grains.

Glock's official stance is to warn against the use of lead bullets because leading in their polygonal-rifled barrels can cause dangerous high pressure situations.

While I've completely avoided soft, swaged lead bullets altogether in my Glocks, I have found no problem with the limited use of true hardcast hunting loads such as the 200-grain Doubletap load, which regular cleanings have shown to not cause excessive leading.



It's plenty accurate and powerful enough for deer and boar at sensible ranges. Normally, I hunt in very dense woods where the shots are short. These areas are especially suited to hunting with a handgun, which eliminates the bashing of a long gun barrel against branches and tree trunks as you weave through the underbrush.

I usually limit my handgun shots to not much beyond bowhunting ranges. In other words, I'm not taking 150-yard shots that would stretch the limits of my practical accuracy and the cartridge's ability to make a clean kill. Even though I can regularly clang the metal plates at 100 yards at the range, I'm comfortable to about 50 yards in actual hunting situations. Maybe you're better than I am, but that's where I've set my limit.

LONG BARREL BENEFITS

There are several benefits as well to the Glock 40's longer, 6.02-inch barrel compared to that of the Glock 20 (4.6 inches):

1. There's the longer sight plane of 8.19 inches that helps you to get the most out of the pistol's accuracy potential. The sight radius on my G20SF is 6.77 inches.



The Trijicon RMR sight mounts easily to the slide of the G40 without the need to remove the pistol's adjustable rear sight.



In addition to their widespread use in competition and tactical applications, reflex sights offer advantages to handgun hunters as well.

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An accessory rail beneath the barrel enables shooters to easily add a laser or light.

2. The longer barrel also means greater velocity out of the cartridge. In testing it side by side with my G20SF, I found an average increase of about 75 fps with the longer barrel of the G40.

3. The longer barrel makes the Glock 40 slightly muzzle-heavy, which makes it easier to hold steady when you're taking carefully aimed shots.

GLOCK 40 FEATURES

My G40 arrived for testing in a lockable plastic case with the usual Glock accessories: plastic cleaning rod, nylon bore brush and magazine loader. Normally the gun is shipped with two 15-round magazines (10-rounders in restricted states).

Because the G40 is a Gen 4 gun, it also came with four interchangeable backstraps, two with beavertails and two without. I opted for a slimmer grip by leaving those backstraps in the case.

The rear sight on my test gun was fully adjustable for windage and elevation. The velocities, bullet weights and points of impact of hunting loads can vary greatly, so I like adjustable sights even when limiting my shots to close range opportunities.

The trigger on most stock Glocks is rated at 5.5 pounds, but the label on my test gun's case read "4.5 pounds." I checked it with a trigger pull gauge and it was indeed about 4.5 pounds. That's a welcome feature on a gun intended primarily for hunting and it's a thousand times better than the 8-pound New York trigger spring I was forced to endure on my duty weapons.

OPTICS READY

Perhaps the key feature on the G40 is Glock's new Modular Optics System (MOS), basically a cut-out in the top of the slide just forward of the rear sight to make this Glock optics-ready. Included were four adapter

TRIJICON'S RMR

The Trijicon RMR sight is the perfect accessory for the Glock 40, and after mounting it using Glock's Modular Optics System, I don't think I'll ever take it off.

Reflex sights, with their quick-to-acquire red dots, have seen widespread use in both competition and tactical applications. But such a sight offers advantages to the handgun hunter as well.

In short-range hunting situations you really don't need magnification in a sight, but you do need a highly visible, easily acquired sight, especially in the frequently-low light of dense woods. Game animals won't always wait around for you to align traditional sights that are hard to see.

The Trijicon RMR (Ruggedized Miniature Reflex) lives up to its name: it is small, unobtrusive and tough. Mine featured a 3.25 MOA adjustable LED red dot. This size proved to be a good choice as it was big enough to acquire quickly, but not so large that it would obscure targets at longer distances.

It was easily adjusted for windage and elevation. The brightness of the dot changed automatically according to the light conditions, but could be controlled manually as well. The sight uses one CR2032 button-type lithium battery, which is very common these days.





As a Gen 4 gun, the Glock 40 comes with four interchangeable backstraps, two with beavertails and two without.



Although the triggers on most stock Glocks are rated at 5.5 pounds, the trigger on the test Model 40 was set for 4.5 pounds, a welcome feature on a gun intended primarily for hunting.



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Field-stripping the Glock 40 is accomplished easily in the same way other Glock pistols are taken down.

"IT MIGHT BE AT ITS BEST AS A BACKCOUNTRY COMPANION, WITH ITS LIGHT WEIGHT, HIGH CAPACITY AND POWERFUL CHAMBERING ALL CONTRIBUTING TO YOUR OVERALL COMFORT LEVEL..."

plates to allow the mounting of reflex sights by various manufacturers without having to remove the rear sight.

This new MOS system will also be offered on the G34, G35 and G41 models, which are more likely to see use as competition guns. A cover plate is included if you opt not to mount a reflex sight.

Having this gun optics-ready direct from the factory greatly enhances its sighting possibilities. I realize there are many out there with hacksaws who prefer to either personalize their guns themselves or hire gunsmiths

to effectively void the warranties for them. I'm not one of them. The more "good to go" a gun is from the factory, the better I like it.

THE REST? STANDARD GLOCK

Aside from the longer barrel, optics-ready slide, lighter trigger and adjustable sights, this G40 is standard-issue Glock, which is a good thing. Those accustomed to Glock's striker-fired Safe Action, grip angle and trigger pull in their defense guns will feel right at home with this hunter.

Takedown is accomplished in the same

manner as other Glock models. Again, familiarity is your friend.

RANGE SESSIONS

Even with my all-thumbs mechanical ability, I was able to mount a Trijicon RMR adjustable LED sight to the G40 quickly and easily without any blood loss or property damage.

In my several range sessions with it, I found the G40 a pleasant gun to shoot. Yes, it's a 10mm handgun that's pleasant to shoot. While still light in weight, the G40's extra

SAR K2P HAS ARRIVED

The SARARMS K2P Semi Auto Pistol is one of the most comfortable 9mm pistols you will use. With its blended surfaces, square barrel lock up, ambidextrous safety, full size grip, compact slide and low barrel axis to grip: the question that comes to mind is, "Where has this pistol been?" Simply the K2P is the ultimate carry pistol that is affordably priced.



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Long-Awaited Longslide

SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: Glock, Inc.

Model: Model 40

Caliber: 10mm Auto

Barrel: 6.02 inches

Weight: 28.15 ounces

Capacity: 15+1, 10+1 in restricted states

Sights: Adjustable, optics-ready with MOS and adapters

Sight Radius: 8.19 inches



SHOOTING RESULTS

Ammo	Velocity (fps)	Avg Group (inches)	Best Group (inches)
Remington UMC 180gr MC	1135	2.0	1.5
Sig Sauer Elite Performance 180gr FMJ	1233	2.25	2.0
American Eagle 180gr FMJ	1062	2.5	2.25
Hornady 180gr XTP	1262	2.0	1.75
Doubletap 180gr JHP	1256	2.0	2.25
Doubletap 200gr JHP	1073	2.5	1.5

MSRP: \$840.00

CONTACT

Glock, Inc.
US.Glock.com



Aside from its use as a hunting handgun, the new G40 would make an excellent wilderness sidearm due to its lighter weight, powerful chambering and manageable recoil. Here Mark Bender, a former colleague of the author, puts the G40 to the test. (Steven Paul Barlow photo)



Glock pistols equipped with the Modular Optics System (MOS) come with a cover plate for the slide when no reflex sight is being used.



A clear white dot adorns the standard front sight.

length of barrel and slide out in front makes recoil very manageable. Anyone who has avoided powerful handguns in the past because of excessive recoil has nothing to fear from the G40.

There were no malfunctions of any kind, which has been my experience with Glocks in general. I fired several hundred rounds through the gun and I was having so much fun that, before I realize it, I depleted most of my personal stock of ammo that I had on hand for my G20SF.

From the bench the pistol shot very well. Five-shot groups at 25 yards averaged between 2 and 2-½ inches with all ammo tested, and several groups were in the 1-½ to

1-¾-inch range.

I don't like to emphasize accuracy from the bench too strongly because there are far too many variables in a limited sample to draw any scientific conclusions. Leave it as anecdotal evidence that the G40 shot very well and I wouldn't hesitate to put that Trijicon red dot on a deer's vitals when the season opens.

THE GLOCK'S PRACTICAL USES

The Glock 40 is a bit large for everyday concealed carry purposes, but I have other Glocks for that role. First and foremost it is a hunting handgun. It can also be used as a

ranch gun for pest control when a long gun might be inconvenient to tote along.

It might be at its best as a backcountry companion, with its light weight, high capacity and powerful chambering all contributing to your overall comfort level when traveling in remote places. It might see double duty as well among competitors who can handload appropriate reduced power loads for the pistol.

I'm not going to give up my G20SF. But my large hunting revolvers are now going to have to make room for this semi-auto with the Trijicon reflex sight atop the slide and share time with it during the big game seasons because this Glock 40 is a keeper. **GW**

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WALTHER MAKES SOME HANDGUN HISTORY
WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PPQ 45 IN .45 ACP

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY GARRETT LUCAS

It's been quite a while since I was surprised by the introduction of a new handgun.

Most new models, even the interesting ones, tend to follow a trend or a pattern. Semi-automatic pistols with polymer frames and/or striker-fired mechanisms are introduced on a regular basis. New revolver introductions tend to involve new calibers, and there seems to be a race to see who can top the latest hand cannon list.

Walther, however, snuck their PPQ 45 in under the radar on me, and I was doubly surprised by both its introduction and my time with it on the range.

Admittedly, I'd missed the train with the PPQ M2 in 9mm. Even though I heard great things about it, I looked out from my rut and said, "Bah! Just another polymer pistol," and I stayed with the tried and true models in my safe that I had absolutely no doubts about with regard to performance and reliability.

As time went on, though, I kept hearing more great reports about the PPQ M2's excellent trigger and its dependability. Finally, all the buzz got to me and I sat down one evening to have a look at Walther's website. I had just about convinced myself to buy a PPQ M2 when I saw something about halfway down the page. It was an innocuous-looking product link to a .45 ACP model. I'd never heard of a .45 ACP Walther before. Had I missed something? I clicked on the link.

It turned about to be a page for the soon-to-be-released PPQ 45, and the "Coming Soon" or "Coming in October" teaser message did the trick. I contacted a Walther rep and asked for a review sample.





The new Walther PPQ 45 in .45 ACP is the first-ever Walther handgun chambered in this popular caliber.



*"THE ERGONOMICS OF
THE PPQ 45'S GRIP MAKE
DEPLOYING AND HOLDING
THE GUN A FLUID AND
COMFORTABLE PROCESS."*

The most outstanding feature of the PPQ 45 is the extremely smooth and light trigger pull, along with an incredibly short reset distance.

OPENING THE CASE

The first surprise with the new PPQ 45 is the simple fact that it's a .45 ACP pistol. During its entire history as an arms manufacturer (and that's nearly 130 years), Walther has offered pistols in various calibers including .22 LR, .25 ACP, .32 ACP, .380 ACP and in 9mm Luger—but never a .45 ACP. With this pistol, however, Walther chose to make some history and offer one of their models in one of the most popular calibers on the U.S. market.

I have to say that seeing the Walther name at the end of the slide near that large bore was pretty exciting. I've always liked the aesthetics of the older Walther pistols, such as the PPK, but I never made the leap to acquire one, mainly because of caliber size. I

believe my thinking may change on that score now. What surprised me even more than the big-bore offering was the exquisite trigger pull when I dry-fired it a few times.

Enthusiasts tend to throw around superlatives when it comes to describing something nice, but in this case, exquisite is a completely apt description. Walther's website lists the trigger pull at between 5.6 and 6 pounds. However, the trigger pull of the sample I received was a consistent 4.2 pounds. I don't know if this is a one-off and I just got lucky, but the PPQ 45 I received for review had the lightest trigger pull of any striker-fired pistol I've ever tried.

I own at least five different brands of striker-fired pistols, a couple of which boast about having the best triggers on the market.

It's not even a close contest. One, with a trigger pull rating of 5.5 pounds, has a little take-up and then you can feel the resistance building before it breaks right at 5.5 pounds of pressure. On the other hand, the Walther's trigger has just the slightest take-up, and then the operator feels nothing until the trigger breaks. There's no flexing in the trigger, and there's no sense of increasing resistance as you squeeze. It just breaks. It's both awesome and downright scary, but breathtaking either way.

OTHER ATTRIBUTES

There's more to talk about than just the trigger pull of the PPQ 45, and that includes the specifications of this new model. With an empty magazine, the PPQ 45 weighs 28



The PPO 45 shares the elegant lines of its older brother, the 9mm model, but has been beefed up to safely handle the larger round.



A three-dot sight system rides on top of the PPO 45's slide, with the rear sight being adjustable for windage.

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The slightly textured molded grips allow for a very comfortable and secure hold, and the American-style magazine release is a welcome sight to keep operation similar to other common firearms.

"I DON'T THINK 'SHOOTABILITY' IS A REAL WORD, BUT I'M GOING TO USE IT ANYWAY."

ounces. It has a width of 1.3 inches, a length of 7.4 inches, and more significantly, has a height of 5.8 inches. For a regular service pistol, it's a bit large overall and has a relatively high bore axis. Of course, that's not a negative trait since proper training will allow a shooter to use just about any gun, but people have their own personal preferences.

The finish on the PPQ 45 is Tenifer, a highly regarded finish known for its durability and corrosion resistance. The pistol also sports an American-style magazine release in lieu of the paddle-type release found on the trigger guard. I personally like trigger-guard magazine releases, but I'm just as comfortable with the standard style, so it makes no difference to me either way.

There is a loaded chamber indicator, an ambidextrous slide release, and the kit includes a right-handed magazine release but-

ton for the lefties out there. Speaking of magazines, the PPQ 45 magazines house 12 .45 ACP rounds, which isn't the highest capacity available among similar pistols, but better than the average. It's also 50% more than a standard eight-round single-stack .45 ACP magazine.

The PPQ 45 comes with a Picatinny rail for attaching lights, lasers, or other accessories, and utilizes a three-dot sight system with the rear sight being adjustable for windage. Additionally, it comes with three interchangeable backstraps (though I only received two with my sample) and features cocking serrations on both the front and rear of the slide.

All in all, the PPQ 45 has all of the latest features you'd expect on a modern combat handgun, and it offers those features in a package with an MSRP of just \$699. In all

likelihood, you will be able to purchase one at the local gun store for a bit less.

THE PROVING GROUNDS

Even if a firearm comes with a host of great features, we all know that it comes down to the shooting before we decide whether or not a weapon is right for us. The same goes for Walther's new offering. It soon came time to head out to the range and get a feel for its shootability, reliability and accuracy potential.

I checked a couple of places, and I don't think "shootability" is a real word, but I'm going to use it anyway. To me, shootability means how the firearm handles, how comfortable the grip is, how easy it is to acquire the target, and how controllable it is while actually shooting. As far as handling goes, the grip of the PPQ 45 is excellent once it's



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The PPQ 45 comes with interchangeable backstraps that are easy to remove with the use of a punch tool. This punch is part of a three-piece set made by Aro-Tek and purchased at Brownells.

The pin to release the backstrap installed on the pistol is located at the heel of the group. Pushing the pin through with the punch tool allows the backstrap to be removed.

properly fitted to the user. The grip is slightly textured, but not abrasive. It has just enough texturing to provide a sure purchase on the pistol.

Also, the ergonomics of the grip are pretty nice. It has an almost neutral feel, as though it is molded to the hand. This is not hyperbole, because I have several similar pistols that are over-textured or feel like a 2x4 in my shooting hand. That's not the case with the PPQ 45.

The bulk of the ammo that I took to the range was supplied by Winchester and in-

cluded their Train & Defend ammunition and some of their PDX1 rounds. I also brought along a few other batches of different brands and loads so I could quickly ascertain what ammo the pistol liked best. I had everything from 160-grain lead-free rounds up to 255-grain hard-cast loads, and they all functioned flawlessly.

It didn't take long to figure out the PPQ 45 preferred the mid-range loads for accuracy. This preference reared its head when I got to the Train and Defend loads and the PDX1 rounds. The groups tightened up a

good amount and stayed mostly in the two to three-inch range. The best group of the day was turned in by the PDX1 (which shot accurately in other sessions), and that group was just under two inches.

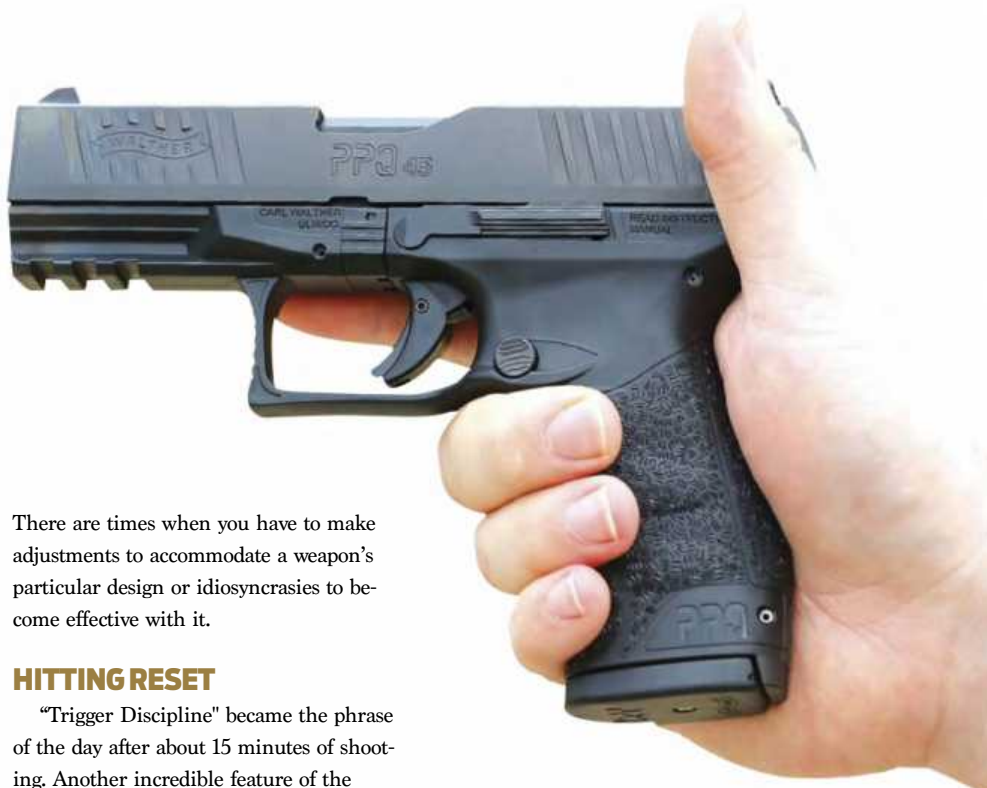
SOME OBSERVATIONS

After a few rounds, I noticed the gun shot a couple of inches to the left. Thankfully enough, the rear sights are adjustable for windage. However, the single slot in the screw head for a flathead screwdriver is extremely shallow. Although I eventually got

the rear sight adjusted, it would have been much easier if the head had a deeper slot for easily inserting a screwdriver, especially to prevent messing up the finish on the head.

After shooting from the bench and offhand, I felt the front sight was too narrow. It was a little difficult to pick up quickly, and with so much daylight showing up on both sides of it in the sight picture, it was easy for the front sight to drift left and right a bit, affecting the point of aim and impact.

One last thing I noticed was that I had to focus more on the follow-through of the shots and maintain a positive grip. I tend to shoot guns with a lower bore axis, and there's not as much muzzle flip on guns with a higher bore-axis like the PPQ 45. After just a few shots it became apparent that I was a bit lax with my grip, so I leaned into it a bit more (figuratively, not literally), ensuring my wrists were strongly locked. With that adjustment, the groups tightened up a bit, so this was clearly my issue, not the pistol's.



There are times when you have to make adjustments to accommodate a weapon's particular design or idiosyncrasies to become effective with it.

HITTING RESET

"Trigger Discipline" became the phrase of the day after about 15 minutes of shooting. Another incredible feature of the PPQ, aside from the trigger pull, is the trigger reset. After a shot is fired, it takes

The PPQ 45's contours and texturing of the grip blend together into an ergonomic and very comfortable hold.

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Winchester's line of Train and Defend ammunition and its PDX1 round turned in good accuracy with the PPQ 45, with the premium rounds averaging groups in the 2-3 inch range.

Big Bore Big Splash

SPECIFICATIONS

Overall Length: 7.4 inches
Barrel Length: 4.25 inches
Caliber: .45 ACP
Height: 5.8 inches
Width: 1.3 inches
Trigger Pull: 5.6 pounds
Magazine Capacity: 12 rounds
Magazines: 2
Finish: Tenifer

MSRP: \$699



CHRONOGRAPH RESULTS

Load	10-Shot Average at 10 Feet
Winchester 230-Gr. Train	824 fps
Winchester 230-Gr. Defend	827 fps
Winchester PDX1	864 fps
Federal 230-Gr. HST	874 fps
Buffalo Bore 160-Gr. Barnes Tax-XP	1192 fps
Buffalo Bore 255-Gr. H.C. +P	911 fps

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"THE WALTHER'S TRIGGER HAS JUST THE SLIGHTEST TAKE-UP, AND THEN THE OPERATOR FEELS NOTHING UNTIL THE TRIGGER BREAKS."

only 0.1 inch of forward trigger movement to reset the firing mechanism. This allows the operator to fire follow-up shots faster than with most typical semi-automatic pistols.

There were a couple of times when I heard, "Buh-Bam!" while firing. Because of the extremely short reset and a random finger twitch, there were a couple times when I fired a second shot before the sights were completely back on target. This should give you an idea of how responsive the combination of the light trigger and short reset is when engaging a target or threat with the PPQ 45.

THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

The ergonomics of the PPQ 45's grip, along with the interchangeable backstraps,

make deploying and holding the gun a fluid and comfortable process. The very light trigger, the best of any striker-fired pistol I've tried, along with the extremely short reset, assist with improved accuracy and lightning-fast follow up shots.

However, since the trigger pull is 4.2 pounds (at least with my sample), it's close to the realm of triggers for target pistols. For daily use, it is akin to carrying a nicely tuned 1911 with the hammer cocked and without any safety mechanism at all. There is a pivoting trigger safety like you'll find on other striker-fired pistols, but I don't feel those types of safeties are as secure as a thumb safety, or even a grip safety. In my opinion, this is a gun for those who will be devoted to

regular practice in order to safely handle and fire the weapon.

There is an expression that speaks of something being greater than the sum of its parts, and in my opinion, the Walther PPQ 45 is the embodiment of that phrase. Like so many new pistols to the market, it has a polymer frame, a striker-fired mechanism, a high capacity magazine, and even the trendy accessory rail.

But what Walther did with those same components—so common in today's world—is produce a rather uncommon result. The new PPQ 45 is a brilliant pistol in both design and function, and it offers extraordinary performance for those than can tame its potential! **GW**

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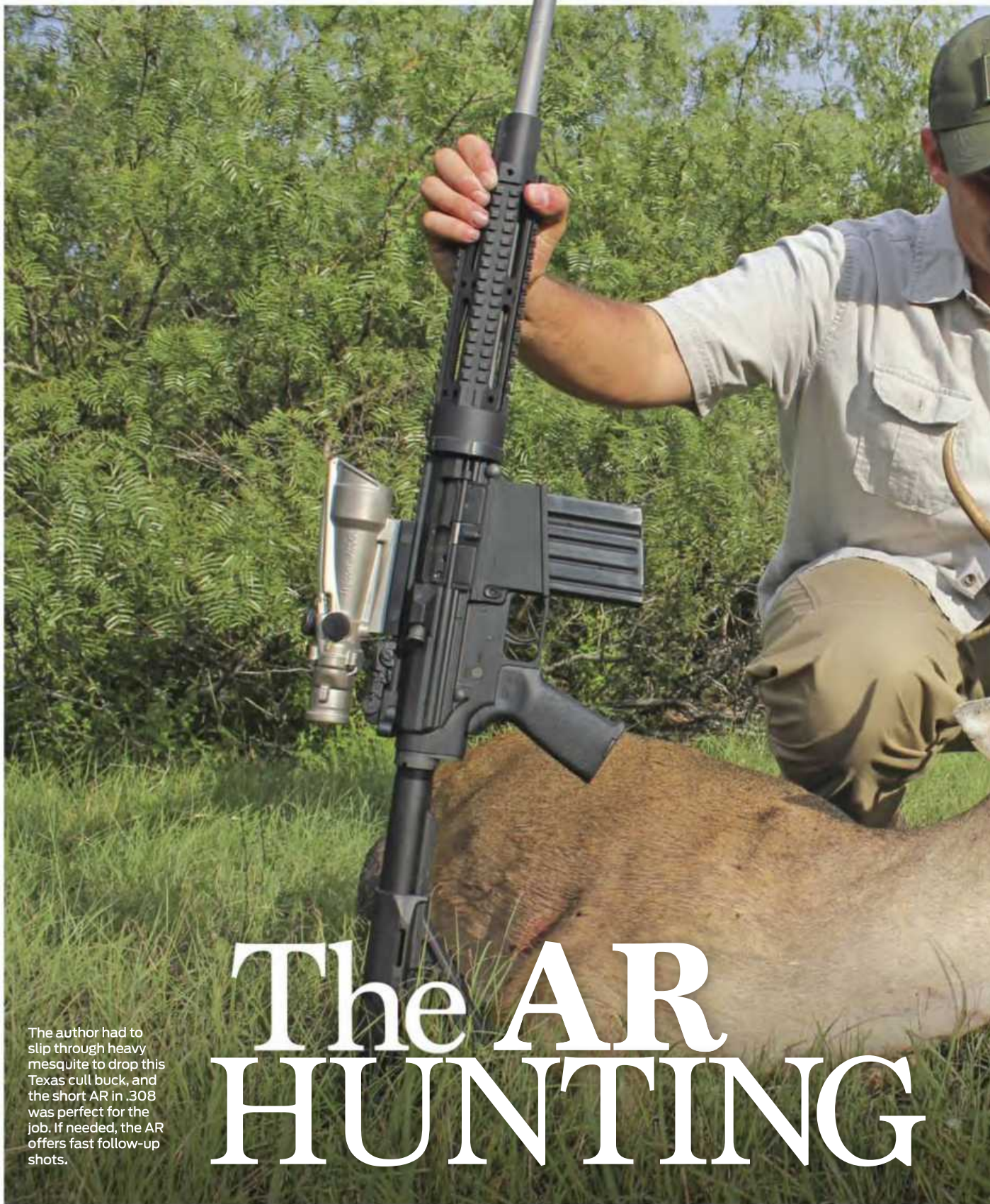
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The author had to slip through heavy mesquite to drop this Texas cull buck, and the short AR in .308 was perfect for the job. If needed, the AR offers fast follow-up shots.

The AR HUNTING



TODAY'S ARS ARE AMONG THE MOST CAPABLE AND VERSATILE **HUNTING FIREARMS** IN THE FIELD.

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY BRAD FITZPATRICK

THE BUCK WALKED SLOWLY up the road and disappeared into a thicket of mesquite. I leaned over to my guide Trevor Umnus, who confirmed my questioning glance with a nod. It was a cull buck, bad for breeding, and the managers at Texas' Mellon Creek Ranch wanted to remove cull bucks from their deer herd, which was already near carrying capacity.

By removing a few bucks with sub-par genetics, we'd help improve the overall health of the herd by lowering the strain on food resources and reducing the risk of disease spreading on the ranch.

But first we would have to find the deer.

I unloaded a DPMS Recon AR rifle in .308 from the truck and Trevor and I made our way down a narrow cattle path in the mesquite that was cut at a 45-degree angle into the thicket. Ideally, the angle of approach would allow us to intercept the deer, but the dense thicket meant that no shot was going to be farther than roughly 30 yards. Getting that close to a whitetail takes finesse, and the difficulty was compounded by the fact that we would have no idea where the deer was until we were very close.

Trevor led the way into the brush and I followed, the rifle across my chest. We continued in file for the better part of an hour, trying to place ourselves ahead of the buck's position. I'd just about given up when Trevor stopped me with an outstretched palm. I could see the hindquarters of a deer twenty yards ahead, and it seemed to sense our presence as well.



Remington's R-25 line is chambered in .308-based cartridges, ideal for hunting medium and small game. When Remington and Bushmaster came under the same ownership in 2006, it allowed for the development of the R-15 and R-25 rifles, AR guns designed specifically for hunters. (Remington photo)



The buck stepped back and craned its neck to see around the brush, and I recognized the antlers. I shouldered the rifle just as the buck's head extended to full height—I instantly recognized that it was our buck based on the antler formation—and I saw him stamp his front leg. It wouldn't be long until he bolted, so when the crosshairs touched his shoulder I pressed the trigger.

The buck collapsed on the spot.

The notion that ARs, black guns, MSRs—or whatever you choose to call them—are indeed useful hunting firearms remains a point of debate, and anti-gun forces have been working hard to persuade the masses that the AR has no place in the field. Indeed, the AR was designed as a military arm, a weapon for the battlefield, but the United States has a long, rich history of converting military firearms to hunting weapons. From the 1873 Winchester to the Springfield bolt-action in .30-40 Krag to the M1 Garand, hunters have long adopted military arms for sporting purposes.

The recent rise of the AR is no different, nor is it any less effective as a hunting weapon than those other firearms. The surge in AR sales has introduced a new generation of shooters to the platform, and now more and more dedicated hunters are carrying ARs afield.



The right hunting AR needs the right optic. This is a Trijicon VCOG 1-6, which has an LED first focal plane BDC reticle and superb glass. It doesn't require rings and can be quickly mounted on your rifle, and the versatile 1-6 magnification range allows you to make shots up close or at long range with ease. (Trijicon photo)

WHAT MAKES THE AR GREAT?

If you own a bolt-action hunting rifle that's served you well for years, you'll need strong evidence to consider a switch to ARs. Fair enough. Let's begin by examining the most compelling reason—modularity.

The AR is considered a “modular platform” because you can customize your rifle to fit almost any hunting situation. In a few minutes' time your dedicated predator rifle can be transformed into a specialized big game gun perfect for taking long shots on elk and mule deer.

You can swap out lights, optics, slings and, if you have a little more knowledge of AR design, triggers, barrels, handguards, stocks and more. Heck, you can even build

your own AR from the ground up if you're so compelled. You can choose caliber, stock length and design, barrel length, operating systems—just about anything you want.

This level of versatility can be daunting for those unfamiliar with ARs, no doubt. Never before have hunters had the option to change so many features on one rifle. Once you become familiar with the AR's basic design and function, though, you'll find that they are simpler to customize and accurize than traditional bolt guns. With an AR there's no concern with bedding a stock, and it's easier to swap out the trigger on ARs than on bolt guns. The ability to swap calibers is a big bonus for AR owners, too—having a couple uppers in different calibers



Rock River Arms' Beast is chambered in .458 SOCOM, a powerful cartridge that produces massive energy figures if you want to put down a boar hog in a hurry.

makes your gun more versatile, and it doesn't take long to switch between varmint and big game calibers.

Part of the fun of owning an AR is adding your own custom touches to the rifle. For instance, my varmint and predator AR is a Mossberg MMR Hunter, which features a reliable gas impingement system. When I purchased the rifle, I upgraded the trigger to a Tac-Con model that gave a clean, crisp, target-quality break and also offered a reset-assist mode. Later, I affixed a bipod to the front of the gun and switched bolt assemblies, and I have two optic systems for the top rail—a Trijicon AccuPoint 3-9x and a Trijicon MRO red dot sight. The former is perfect for hunting coyotes at long range in any light conditions, and the latter is great for shots at fast-moving dogs in dense cover. I plan to upgrade to a custom barrel next.

Many ARs offer rail space that's perfect for adding accessories like lights, vertical foregrips, additional optics, bipods, slings and more. This makes it easy to customize your AR even further based on the game you are hunting and the conditions. On a hog hunt in Mississippi we had Smith & Wesson ARs equipped with Leupold scopes and Crim-

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son Trace foregrips with infrared technology. That offered two separate sighting systems—one for daylight, one for darkness.

The reasons to buy an AR don't stop there. You've also got to consider that ARs can be separated into uppers and lowers, making them much shorter in overall length than standard bolt-actions and much easier to transport. Recoil from most ARs is minimal, even in powerful hunting calibers like .450 Bushmaster and .308 Winchester. And as suppressors become more common and legislation to allow their ownership spreads to more states, most AR rifles are ready to accept a can with no modification, which is a real bonus.

CHOICES, CHOICES

Even if modularity is of little concern to you as a hunter, that doesn't mean an AR isn't for you. There are plenty of factory ARs that require nothing more than scope mounting before being field-ready.

When Remington and Bushmaster came under the same ownership in 2006 (and, a year later, AR giant DPMS joined the stable) Remington suddenly had the AR technology they needed to bring the platform to more hunters than ever before. The introduction of the Remington R-15 and R-25 rifles caught the eye of hunters that might not have ever heard of Bushmaster or DPMS, and with Big Green supporting the cause there was an uptick in the number of hunters switching to the AR platform.

The R-15 and R-25 still exist today, and are chambered in a wide variety of calibers that are perfect for hunting everything from coyotes to caribou. The R-15 is available in .204 Ruger and .223 as well as the mighty .450 Bushmaster, quite possibly the best cartridge for putting big feral boars on the ground. The R-25 is based on the .308 family of cartridges, so that includes the .243 and the 7mm-08.

In addition to Remington, other companies offer ARs that were specifically designed for hunting. DPMS offers an extensive line of hunting rifles chambered in .223, .260 Remington, .243 Winchester, .338 Federal, 6.5 Creedmoor, and .308. As purpose-built hunting rifles these guns lose their accessory rails in favor of a round aluminum alloy



The AR is a great predator rifle because it offers extremely good accuracy and fast follow-up shots. The author stopped this Texas coyote with a Mossberg MMR and a Trijicon SRS sight, a great combo for dropping hard-charging dogs at close range.



The AR's modularity allows you to customize these rifles to fit your exact specifications. The author's buddy Doug Howlett dropped this Texas cull buck with one shot from his AR-10 in .308.

handguard that's both lightweight and comfortable, and their flat top-rails make mounting a scope quick, easy and secure.

I previously mentioned Mossberg's MMR line, which I used on an aerial shoot to control feral hog populations. I put hundreds of rounds through the rifle in a few hours of shooting and found that the gas impingement system performed perfectly despite the stress and rough handling. Mossberg offers these rifles with 20-inch barrels and three color options—black, Mossy Oak Treestand and Mossy Oak Brush, all at bargain prices considering the quality of these firearms.

Smith & Wesson offers a full line of M&P hunting rifles in calibers ranging from

.223 to .300 Whisper (there's also a number of rimfire options if you like to hunt squirrels and cottontails or need a rifle to dispatch vermin). Rock River Arms has a number of really great hunting rifle options, too, from specialized predator rifles to big-bores for big hogs chambered in .458 SOCOM.

So no matter what side of the AR hunting rifle discussion you find yourself on, they have proven to be effective and have earned their place afield alongside their more traditional bolt-action brethren. And, if the new generation of shooters raised and trained on the platform have anything to say about it, they are certainly here to stay. **GW**

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Although Winchester Super Field is primarily a shotgun powder, it can be used successfully in handguns of several calibers.
(Henry De Kuyper photo)

Experimental Need

LOADING WINCHESTER SUPER FIELD (WSF) AND THE .45 AUTO

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY JAMES E. HOUSE

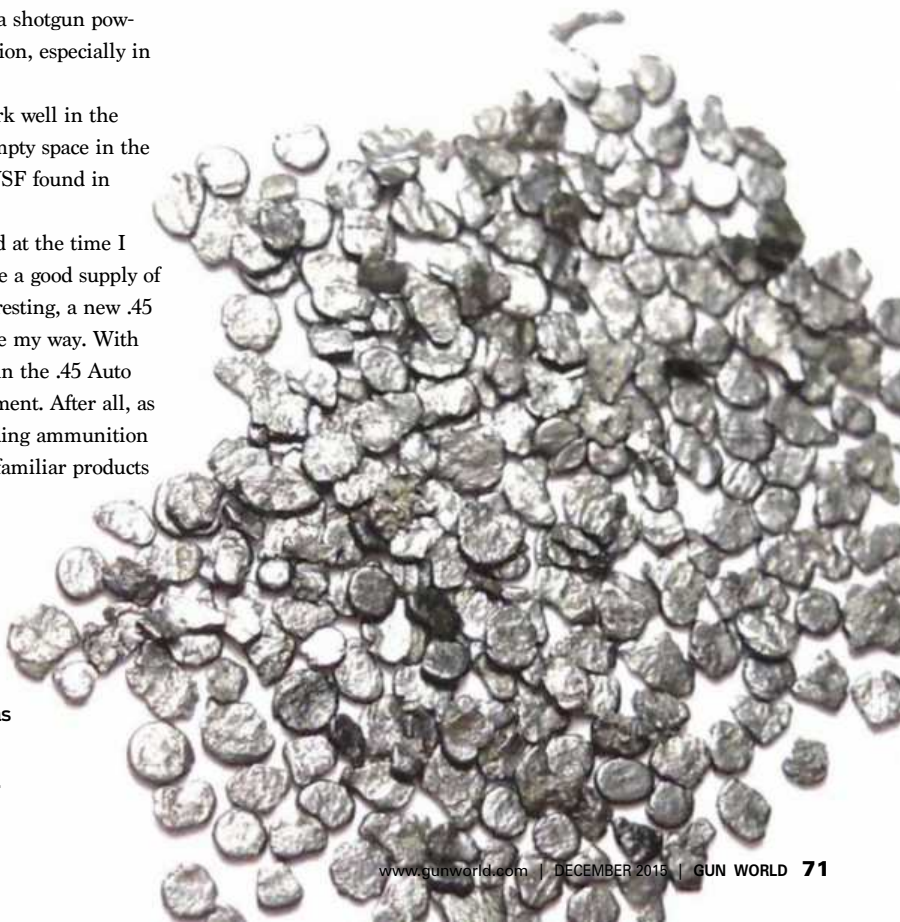
WHEN LOADING AMMUNITION, there can be many reasons to experiment. Information may be lacking for some particular combination of powder, bullet, and caliber. Not long ago, finding powders, especially those suitable for loading handgun ammunition, was next to impossible.

Recently, during the period of acute powder shortage, I stumbled on a few pounds of Winchester Super Field (WSF) in the older packaging for half price on a clearance sale. Although primarily a shotgun powder, WSF is also useful for loading handgun ammunition, especially in some of the most popular autoloading pistol calibers.

However, it's apparently a powder that does not work well in the large cases of revolver calibers that result in a lot of empty space in the loaded cases. As a result, almost all loading data for WSF found in handbooks indicate its use in autoloader calibers.

I like to shoot 185-grain bullets in the .45 Auto, and at the time I found the Winchester WSF powder I happened to have a good supply of such bullets available. To make things even more interesting, a new .45 Auto handgun, a Colt Gold Cup National Match, came my way. With loading data being a little sparse for 185-grain bullets in the .45 Auto using WSF as the propellant, it was *necessary* to experiment. After all, as stated in one of my handgun owner's manuals, "reloading ammunition is a science." So, careful experimentation with two unfamiliar products was in order.

WSF performs double duty as an ideal choice to maximize velocities in 12-gauge 1-1/8 ounce and 1-1/4 ounce loads.





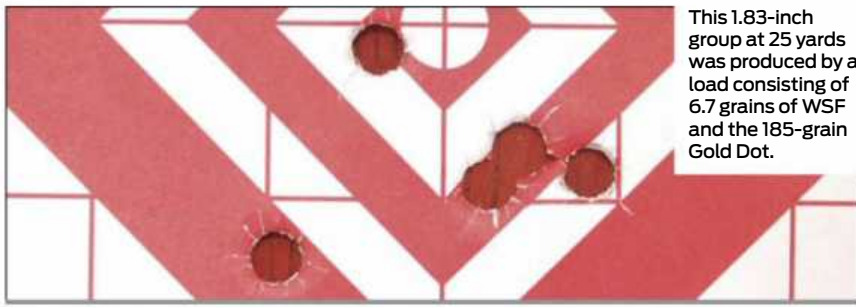
The Colt Gold Cup National Match turned out to be an excellent tool for testing.

Loading Data and Results for 185-Grain .45 Auto Loads Using Winchester WSF

Bullet	Case	OL, in.	Powder	Load 1		Load 2	
				Gr.	Vel.	Gr.	Vel.
185 gr Remington G.S.	Win.	1.237	Win. WSF	6.7	821	7.1	902
185 gr Rainier HP	Win.	1.257	Win. WSF	6.7	817	7.1	929
185 gr Nosler HP	Win.	1.235	Win. WSF	6.7	854	7.1	916
185 gr Berry HP	Win.	1.250	Win. WSF	6.7	826	7.1	888
185 gr Speer Gold Dot	Win.	1.241	Win. WSF	6.7	838	7.1	901
185 gr Hornady SWC	Win.	1.154	Win. WSF	6.7	935	7.1	990

Velocities (fps) are shown as the average for five shots.

These loads were safe and reliable in the author's handgun, but neither the author nor the publisher accepts any responsibility for their preparation and use by others or for typographical errors.



This 1.83-inch group at 25 yards was produced by a load consisting of 6.7 grains of WSF and the 185-grain Gold Dot.

THE PROJECT BEGINS

The project began by preparing a batch of Winchester cases measuring 0.898 inches in length and priming them with Winchester large pistol primers. The 185-grain bullets chosen included the Remington Golden Saber, Nosler Hollow Point, Rainier Hollow Point, Hornady semi-wad-cutter, Berry Hollow Point, and Speer Gold Dot. This selection includes hollow pointed defense bullets, plated bullets, and a target bullet.

As usual, there is a rather wide range of recommended charges found in the various sources of data. Based on the loading data that I found with Winchester WSF in the .45 Auto, I chose to use charges of 6.7 and 7.1 grains for each type of 185-grain bullet. The goal here was to make accurate and useful loads with no attempt to produce maximum power.

When I feel the need for .45 Auto loads that generate the upper limit of thrust, I can resort to several factory loads that fill that role. The primary goal of the experiment was to provide a frame of reference for using the WSF I found as a propellant in developing loads with 185-grain bullets in a new pistol.

Cartridges were assembled using Winchester cases primed with Winchester large pistol primers. All powder charges were weighed on an electronic scale, and each load was tested by firing five cartridges in a Colt Gold Cup National Match with a five-inch barrel. Velocities were measured at 10 feet from the muzzle with a Competition Electronics ProChrono chronograph. Pertinent data on the loads and the results obtained are summarized in the accompanying table.

Even though all of the bullets utilized have the same weight and their powder charges were identical, the velocities were different. As a result of differences in bullet length, seating depths differ and, there-

fore, the volume of free space in the cartridges differs. Also, velocity varies for bullets of different construction because the bullets do not have the same amount of bearing surface. The largest discrepancy is with the Hornady SWC, whose greater bearing surface and deeper seating produced the highest velocities.

Most of the 185-grain loads tested with Winchester WSF performed as well as I expected. They were fired with hands supported on a rest, but with no other means of steadying the gun. Some of the loads gave good accuracy at 25 yards, but with a machine rest I am sure the results would have been much better. I have a long way to go to be able to test the accuracy of a Colt Gold Cup firing as I did.

The 7.1-grain load with the Rainier hollow point gave very uniform velocities and good groups. One of the day's best groups is shown in the above photo, but the 7.1-grain load with the Berry hollow point gave a group that measured 1.92 inches. Without much adjustment of loads, it is evident that some are capable of good accuracy. Shooting them in a Colt Gold Cup doesn't hurt either.

The results obtained in this work indicate that even though I found the Winchester WSF for half price, it produces fully satisfactory results in .45 Auto loads. At the time I bought the powder, I had never used it before. Now I wish I had bought more of it because the loads utilizing it work really well in my pistol.

And just in case you're curious, it did not take long for me to become strongly attached to the Gold Cup. **GW**

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You can fly with handguns, but they must be in a locked hard-sided case, such as this popular model from Pelican. Declare them at the airport check-in.

Into The Wild Blue Yonder

FLYING WITH **HANDGUNS** IS FAIRLY SIMPLE,
AS LONG AS YOU FOLLOW THE RULES.

► TEXT BY DAVE WORKMAN, PHOTOS BY HENRY DEKUYPER



As I write this, I've just returned from the 30th annual Gun Rights Policy Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, a veritable "Who's Who" of Second Amendment activists gathered for a weekend of panel discussions, networking and grassroots organizing.

At any given time in that room filled with 300-400 people, a good 50 percent of them were armed, and since many had come from long distances via airplane, a lot of hardware had arrived via the proverbial "friendly skies." Among those packing a sidearm was yours truly. On this trip, I

took along my ever-trusty Kimber Custom Compact, a .45-caliber powerhouse that has probably logged enough sky miles to earn a free round-trip ticket somewhere.

How easy is it to fly with a handgun? So long as one follows the rules, it should not be difficult at all. But if you start making up your own rules or overlook something, you could be in for an interesting experience.

The Transportation Safety Authority (TSA) has a website with several recommendations for you to consult, but here are a few of my own thoughts and observations based on years of personal experience.



A soft-sided case is great for transporting your gun to the range, but it is completely unacceptable for air travel unless it is placed inside a hard-sided, lockable case.

LOCK IT

Spend the money to get a locking, hard-sided handgun case. Soft padded gun covers, even those with zippers that have a lock ring, won't do. I have long owned a tough little blue case from Daskocil that is locked with two small padlocks. It's amply padded inside and there is room for the Kimber or one of my Commanders and a couple of spare magazines.

Because a typical pistol case for transporting a defensive sidearm will generally fit

inside all but the smallest of suitcases, I have always placed that case inside my suitcase and locked it. The suitcase is always locked with a TSA-approved combination lock that may be opened with a TSA master key (don't worry, all of these combination locks for airline travel feature key access for this very reason).

UNLOAD IT

All firearms must be unloaded. Period. End of story. No exceptions. Make sure that

your pistol or revolver is unloaded by visually checking it before you lock it in the hard-sided case. This case **MUST** be packed inside your checked baggage. The TSA says this: "Firearms must be unloaded and locked in a hard-sided container and transported as checked baggage only. Firearm parts, including firearms frames and receivers, must also be placed in checked baggage and are prohibited in carry-on baggage." You got that?

One other thing you might consider is

adding a cable lock or trigger lock, rendering your cased firearm even more secure. Smith & Wesson, Taurus and some of the other gun makers have designed their own internal locking systems for handguns that take care of this chore for you.

BOX IT

According to the TSA's website guidelines, "Firearm magazines and ammunition clips, whether loaded or empty, must be securely boxed or included within a hard-sided case containing an unloaded firearm."

I never place a loaded magazine inside the gun case with an unloaded firearm. My ammunition is in the original box or a hard plastic ammo wallet, stored elsewhere inside the suitcase.

The TSA regulations also indicate that "small arms ammunition, including ammunition not exceeding .75 caliber for rifle or pistol and shotgun shells of any gauge, may be carried in the same hard-sided case as the firearm, as described in the packing guidelines above."

A retired attorney friend of mine, who also attended the Gun Rights conference, flying down to Phoenix from Minneapolis, had a bit of fun with this during his departure. As he related the incident, the TSA agent told him he couldn't have the ammunition in the same case as the unloaded Browning Hi-Power he brought along. But my pal had taken the precaution of printing out the regulations and had a copy in his pocket, which he quickly shared with the agent. That put an end to any doubt about who was right.

DECLARE IT

You must declare all firearms, ammunition and gun parts to the airline during the check-in process. At Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, from whence I departed, I simply walked up to the airline agent and told him, "I have a firearm to declare, it is unloaded and locked." The ticket agent taped on the baggage claim ribbon and I strolled over to the TSA check booth where the TSA agent opened my bag as I watched, examined inside, saw the gun case was



Cases with steel reinforcement at the locking points provide an extra measure of security.

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Using a case within a case is recommended, as long as the TSA has access to the gun if needed.

locked, wiped some patches around my suitcase and cleared the bag for the checked luggage belt.

It didn't work that way in Phoenix, where the airline agent took my suitcase after I declared the firearm and put it on a conveyor belt. Somewhere inside the terminal the bag was checked, presumably by X-ray, while I waited several minutes in case a TSA agent

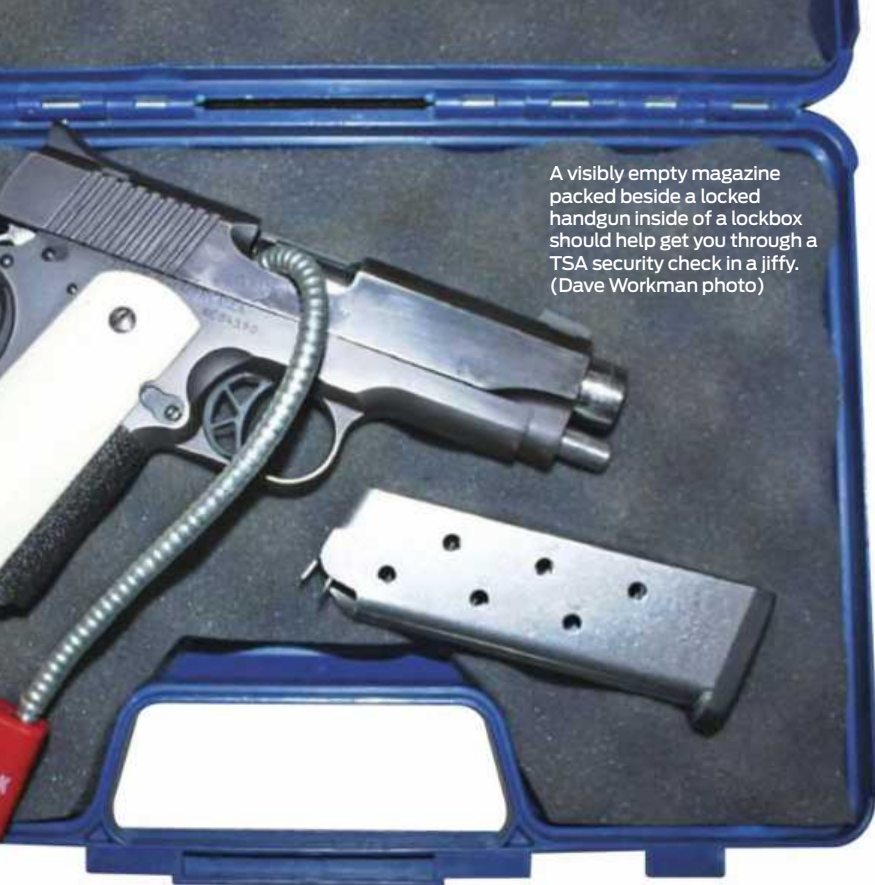
wanted me to open the suitcase. When that didn't happen, I headed for home.

Therein is a lesson. I've flown through several airports, in Florida, South and North Carolina, Virginia, Alaska and elsewhere. The screening process seems to vary slightly from airport to airport, so don't be impatient, and be prepared for something different.

PACK IT

Never, *ever* try to get a handgun through a security checkpoint. People who forget they have a pistol in their carry-on bag fall into the category of "a special kind of stupid."

And here is one other bit of advice. Get to the airport in plenty of time to clear your TSA check and reach the gate well ahead of your departure. In the past I've seen people



A visibly empty magazine packed beside a locked handgun inside of a lockbox should help get you through a TSA security check in a jiffy. (Dave Workman photo)



When you declare a sidearm in your checked luggage, the ticket agent will hand you a card like this. Sign and date it, and either toss it into your lockable gun box or lay it right on top of the closed, locked box when you close your suitcase. (Dave Workman photo)

rush at the very last minute to the ticket counter and then try to get through the security checkpoint, typically whining all the way because they are in a hurry to catch a flight.

FINAL THOUGHTS

With today's inherent problems at airports, if you're not at least an hour early, you're late. If your time is so important that

you just can't make a flight on time, take a bus. Don't compound your tardiness by trying to breeze through a baggage check, and check a handgun in your luggage in the process.

The bottom line here is that it is legal to fly with firearms, but you must follow the rules. It can be a little nerve wracking the first couple of times, but once you get used to it, you will travel with confidence. **GW**

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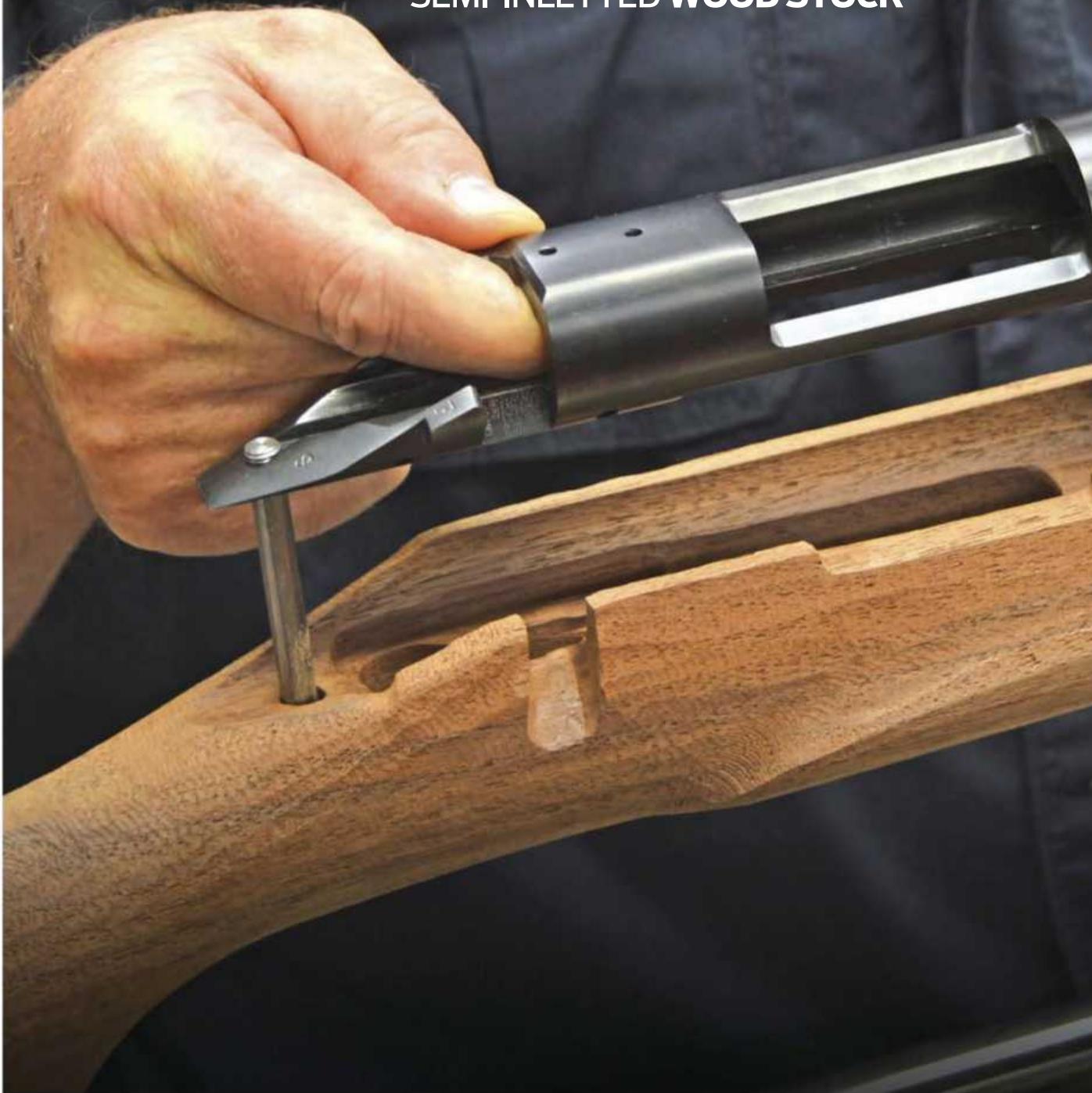
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Taking

FITTING AND FINISHING THE
SEMI-INLETTED WOOD STOCK



Stock



Inletting pins are mandatory for getting the barreled action to sit straight down into the stock for inletting.

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY STEVE SIEBERTS

THIS MONTH, WE KICK OFF a new project gun. Regular readers will recall our 1911 Project Gun, and soon I'll cover the Remington 870, 11/87 and S&W M686. I have two Remington M700s in 22-250 that are serving as project guns, and one will be rebarreled in the same caliber, 22-250, but with a match grade barrel, while the other will be converted from 22-250 Remington to 308 Win. and form the basis of a tactical rifle.

I've covered two methods of glass bedding in previous columns—spot bedding and block bedding—with three rifles with both laminated and synthetic stocks. This time, our project will demonstrate a third method: pillar bedding with a semi-inletted wood stock.

Once the stock is fitted and finished with a recoil pad and sling swivels, we will pillar bed the rifle with aluminum bedding sleeves. It's the most labor intensive, but also the most effective method of stock bedding there is.



The floorplate just barely starts to go down into the stock. This is a very close fit that's a testament to the CNC machine inletting done at the Wening stock factory.

PILLAR BEDDING DEFINED

So what is pillar bedding? Simply put, the rifle's stock screw holes are drilled out and enlarged to over ½-inch in diameter to accommodate two aluminum pillars, which will be epoxied into place.

Why is this the most effective method to glass bed a rifle? Think about what happens to a rifle stock—especially a wood rifle stock—when the guard screws are tightened. The stock is compressed between the action and the bottom metal, or trigger guard. This

compression affects the accuracy considerably. In addition, wood absorbs or gives off moisture depending on the outside humidity, and the stock will shrink and swell with the changes in the moisture content of the wood. Obviously, these structural changes will also affect accuracy. So the ideal situation is to keep the relationship between the stock and barreled action as inert and stable as possible, and this is where the pillar bedding comes in.

When pillar bedded, the stock screws are

tightened to a specific torque setting and the rifle does not compress or expand, at least in the critical action area, because we have isolated the barreled action and the trigger in the stock. Together, the barreled action, the pillars and the bottom metal are acting as one solid piece.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

INLETTING A SEMI-FITTED STOCK

The first segment of our project can pro-

The Remington action just barely fits down into the Wening stock. The barrel channel will take the longest amount of time to fit. Once that's done, the rest of the work goes pretty quickly.



The Clymer chamber reamer and headspace gauges will be used to deepen the short chamber of the Shilen barrel and set the headspace to minimum depth.



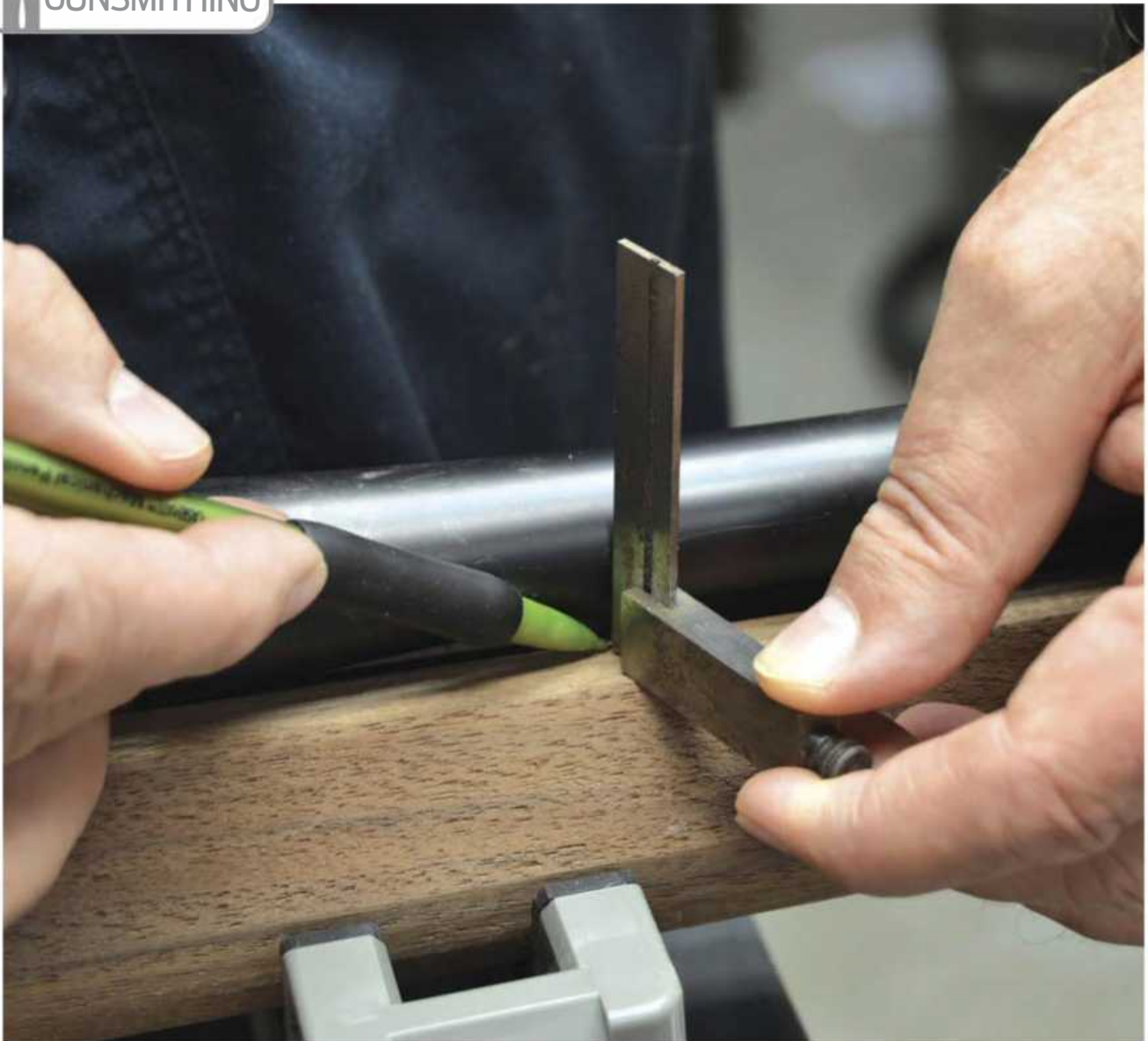
vide very satisfying results, especially if you know what you're getting into ahead of time. Remember, the stock we are using is shaped fairly close on the outside, with enough room and extra material to allow a little creativity by the riflesmith. The action area, likewise, is fitted fairly close, but is undersized to allow a close fit between metal and wood. The barrel channel is then left with a small half-round groove for the riflesmith to fit the forend to any barrel contour.

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The machinist's square is used with a mechanical pencil to draw a contour line for the barrel channel. Hold the point of the pencil just inside the corner of the square to make sure you don't make the channel too wide. You want to sneak up on the inletting. Remember, it's easier to take material off than it is to put it back on, especially with a wood stock. A fiberglass stock can be filled with Bondo or other fiberglass filler.

"IT'S THE MOST LABOR INTENSIVE, BUT ALSO THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF STOCK BEDDING THERE IS."

This will actually be the hardest part of the job. There is a lot of material to fit, and over a long section. So, to fit the barreled action we need to establish a layout line.

The top of the stock has been planed smooth and level, so we'll use that as a surface guide. With a machinist's square and a mechanical pencil held next to the corner of the square, run the square and the pencil

along the full length of the barrel contour. This will give us a line to follow when removing wood. Remember, hold the pencil inside the edge at the corner of the square to ensure you are laying out a line inside the outer contour of the barrel. This is to ensure that when we remove wood up to the line, we still have a little bit to go to get to the actual barrel contour. In other words, this is

our safety margin. We will free float the barrel, but we don't want a giant gap either, and it's always easier to remove material than to put it back on.

TOOLS FOR THE JOB

Two primary tools to inlet the stock are a curling scraper and a barrel channel inletting tool. The barrel channel tool will re-



This shows the faint pencil layout line that follows the contour of the barrel and the original barrel channel cut by Wening. You can see that they leave quite a bit of material to let the riflesmith fit any barrel contour.

BARRELING AHEAD

As I was writing this column, I received a barrel for the next rifle project gun, the tactical rifle I'm building also using a Remington M700. Like the first barrel I received for the 22-250 project gun, this is also a pre-threaded, short-chambered match barrel in stainless steel, except this is chambered for 308 Win. The difference between the two barrels for these rifles is that this barrel has a Shilen precision ground, oversized recoil lug that will be fitted.

These recoil lugs are precision ground absolutely parallel and oversized about .063 from a stock recoil lug. I've always used these lugs with any gun of 308 caliber and above with excellent results.

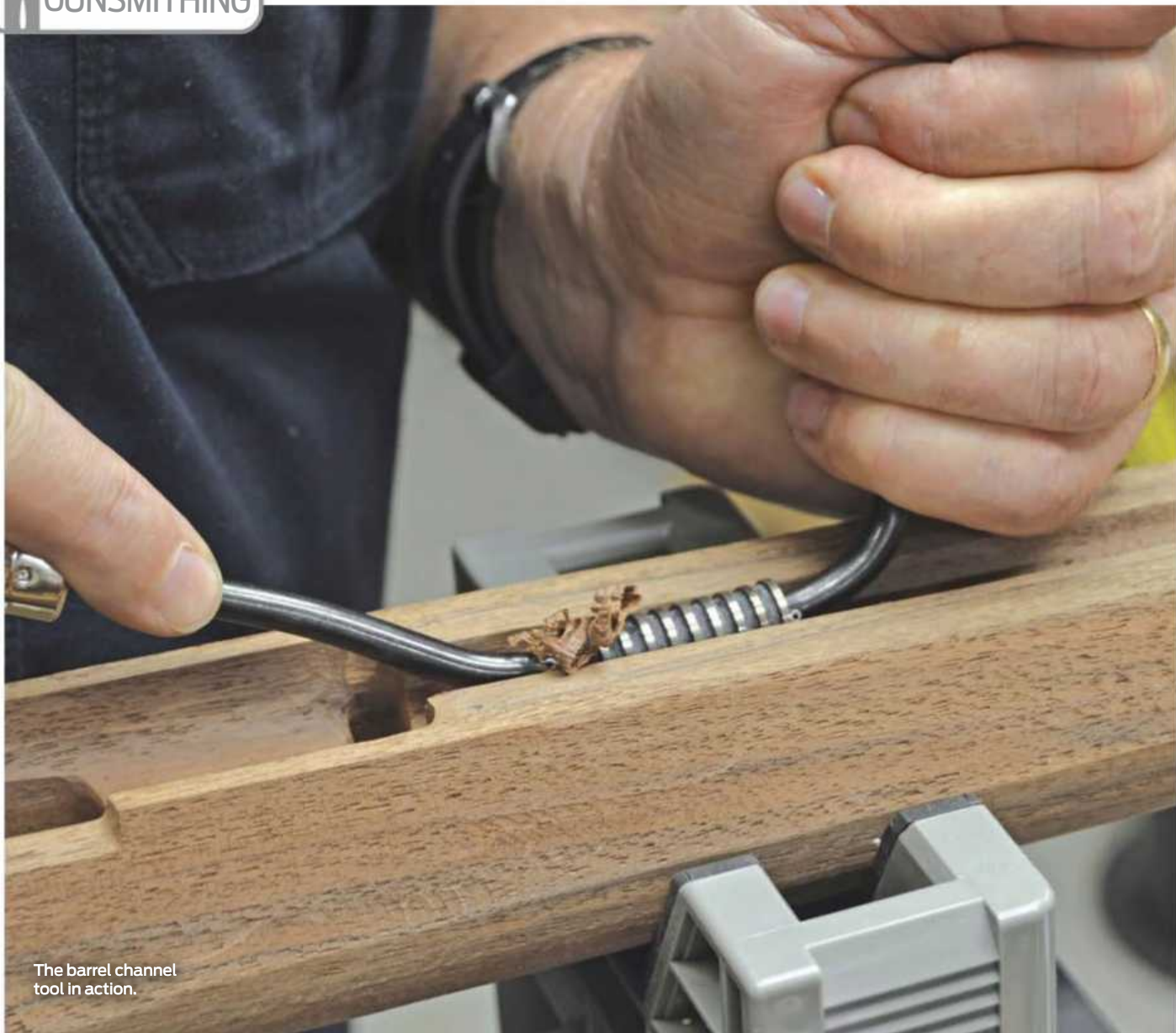
Also shown is the match grade 308 Win. chamber reamer and headspace gauges from Clymer Mfg. Critical tools for building an accurate rifle.



The curling scraper is used for removing small amounts of wood.



Here, I'm checking the width and depth of the barrel channel. If the channel is too deep, there will be a gap on the point; if the point is on the bottom and there is a gap on the sides, the channel is either too wide or too shallow. Check your work as you go as often as possible.



The barrel channel tool in action.

move wood quickly and the curling scraper removes small amounts. Other key items are inletting black and inletting pins. The black is brushed onto the bottom of the action with an acid brush or other small brush, then the action is placed into the stock and removed; the inletting black will show the high spots. I'll show this a bit more once I get the barrel channel opened up and the action set down into the stock more as the process moves along.

The machinist's square is also used to show when the barrel channel is being opened up evenly. Turn the square with the point down toward the bottom of the channel. The point and the sides of the square

should all be touching the wood at the bottom and the sides at the same time as you are inletting the barrel channel. Any gaps mean you have taken off too much material and need to switch to another area. In other words, if there is a gap on the bottom, work on the sides, and vice versa. Use it as a guide to gauge where to take off wood.

Once all of the wood work is complete, I'll remove the barrel and install the pre-threaded and short-chambered barrel, glass bed and fit the H-S Precision synthetic stock with a modified block bedding method.

The barreled action will then be shipped off to a metal finisher for application of an all-weather finish, so stay tuned. **GW**





The curling scraper (TOP) and the barrel channel inletting tool, available from Brownells, are essential for fitting the barreled action. The barrel channel tool is available in a variety of diameters.

CONTACT

Brownells Inc.
Brownells.com

Clymer Reamers
(248) 853-5555
Clymertool.com
Clymer@Clymertool.com

Remington Arms Company, LLC
Remington.com

Shilen Rifles, Inc.
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Shilen.com

Wenig Custom Gunstocks
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This is the barrel vise (LEFT) and barrel wrench that will be used to remove the factory barrel. Once we get the barreled action installed, the recoil pad fitted, and the stock bedded and finished, the factory barrel will be removed for the Shilen stainless match barrel, and the rifle will be bedded and installed on the H-S Precision stock.



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The author (left) first met up with Hillbilly Rifles owner Nathan Chesney at the Great American Outdoor Show. Chesney's company specializes in custom rifles with hand-tuned Model 700 actions set in both laminated and synthetic stocks.

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IF YOU'RE A FAN OF QUALITY WORKMANSHIP, THERE ARE PLENTY OF POSSIBILITIES TO EXPLORE AT **HILLBILLY RIFLES'** CUSTOM SHOP IN NEWPORT, VERMONT

► TEXT & PHOTOS BY PHIL MASSARO

EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, you come across a rifle that catches your eye and makes you want to pick it up. That happy phenomenon happened to me most recently while strolling around the Great American Outdoor Show in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I stopped short at the Hillbilly Rifles booth and quickly introduced myself to a man who turned out to be Nathan Chesney, the owner.

"What do we have going on here?" I asked. The carbon-fiber barrels and multi-colored stocks grabbed my eye.

"Well, just some hand-tuned Model 700 actions," he answered, "with properly adjusted triggers, housed in quality laminated and synthetic stocks. Ya know, stuff a guy needs."

I soon came to appreciate Nathan's dry Vermont demeanor. We talked about several models, some being as simple as a tuned action in a Boyd's laminate stock, to his personal rifle: a Remington Model 700 Titanium action – skeletonized to be as light as possible while still being rigid – with a fat, carbon fiber wrapped barrel, set in a Proof Research synthetic stock with a gray paint-splatter finish.

When he handed me his own gun – on display as an example of the custom work that Hillbilly does – I had that reaction you get when you bend over to lift a cardboard box that you think is really heavy but is actually empty. I was shocked at how light the gun was. Unloaded, with a 2.5-10x42 Nightforce 30mm tube riflescope on board, the gun weighed a mere 7.6 pounds.

Glancing at the receiver, I saw the rifle was chambered for the .300 Winchester Short Magnum cartridge, a choice that would handle 90% of the world's big game, yet brings the benefit of the short-action receiver to help shave the ounces off the package. With the light weight of the rifle, I was concerned about hellacious recoil, until I saw the ample muzzle brake on the front.



The 700 Titanium fluted bolt shaves ounces off the rifle.

Nathan must have noticed the wandering look in my eyes and made me a deal on the spot. And true to his word, he shipped the gun to me after the show so I could spend some time with it.

When the rifle arrived, I had a quiet moment to examine it more closely. While I've never been a huge fan of the Remington 700 action (they work fine and have a fantastic lock time, but I've determined that I'm a controlled round feed guy, with no apologies for that), there is no denying that the Model 700 Titanium is among the coolest of the 700s. The bolt handle is hollowed out and the bolt is fluted, and being lighter than steel, yet just as strong, the Titanium receiver is definitely a viable choice for a lightweight gun. As is typical of the 700 action, the bolt throw is very smooth, and Nathan has worked the stock trigger to the point where it breaks very cleanly at 2-½ pounds with virtually no creep or over-travel.

For testing, Nathan had topped the gun with a sweet Nightforce NTX riflescope, a great choice for long-range work since they are rock-solid, take adjustment very well and use fantastic glass. The recent sniper movies

have helped augment their popularity, with good cause; for a precision riflescope, the Nightforce brand is a fine choice for hitting distant targets and keeping your rifle properly zeroed. However, that dependability usually comes at the cost of a heavier-than-normal riflescope.

This particular model came equipped with the Mil-Dot reticle to make holdover a touch easier, and the Power Throw Lever makes changing magnification much easier with frozen fingers or gloves on. The NXS 2.5-10x42, with its 30mm tube for enhanced light transmission, weighs in at just under 20 ounces and is just shy of a foot long. That'll also give you a good idea of how light the Hillbilly rifle is unscoped – just a touch over five pounds when you remove the Nightforce and the pair of one-piece Talley ring/base combinations, one of the most dependable scope mounting systems I've ever used.

Most rings require quite a bit of lapping to get the proper amount of contact for the scope to “go to sleep”, but I've found that Talley always needs the least amount of attention in that department. When it comes to a rifle with heavy recoil – as you can

imagine this lightweight gun, in a magnum caliber, could easily produce – I am a firm believer in Talley rings.

Shouldering the rifle, I quickly noticed that the length of pull was much too short for me, but being Nathan's personal rifle I understood. You see, I stand six feet tall, and, well, Nathan does not. The 12-¾-inch LOP fits him (and my wife, for that matter) perfectly, but my long arms usually like 14 or 14-½ inches, depending on the amount of clothing I'm wearing in the field. Of course, were I to order this style of gun it would be no issue to have the correct length of pull.

The Proof Research stock has a very gentle curve to the pistol grip, and that comes in handy when trying to keep your middle and ring fingers away from the trigger guard during recoil. The comb is set up for the use of a riflescope, so when the rifle comes to shoulder, the sight picture and target acquisition is right there.

At Hillbilly Rifles, Nathan hand fits all the custom stocks, and the fit of the test model left nothing to be desired. There were no unnecessary gaps around the receiver, and there was a suitable amount of clearance



On a rifle this light, in a magnum caliber, a good muzzle brake is much appreciated.

in the barrel channel; you could slide a dollar bill between the barrel and stock with no resistance at all. The lightweight sling swivel studs are stainless steel and secured to the stock in a well-crafted flush mount, using two Torx-head bolts to hold them secure. The bottom metal is also set flush in the stock, with only the hinged floorplate sitting above the line of the stock for proper function.

With the exception of the carbon-fiber barrel and the safety lever, all of the metal parts of the rifle are Cerakoted at Hillbilly Rifles in a nice, matte dark gray color. This creates a finish that is impervious to weather, yet won't glare in the sun when stalking game. To take the sting out of the .300 WSM, Hillbilly has installed a custom-fitted KICK-EEZ recoil pad.

The carbon fiber barrel has been around for a while, but to be completely honest, I've never had the opportunity to play with one. Nathan explained the reason behind it: "There is a slim-contour steel barrel inside, wrapped in layers of carbon fiber. You get the obvious bene-

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Nathan takes his time polishing the magazine follower and feed ramp for smooth cartridge feeding.

fits of the light barrel, but as carbon fiber is more rigid than steel, you get the performance of the bull barrel at the weight of a sporter.” He wasn’t incorrect.

So there I was with this cool setup, my mind wandering to the remote places of the earth, when I decided that some range time was in order.

I had a couple of handloads that have performed well in other .300 WSMs, as well as some good stuff from Federal, including the Federal Premium 180-grain Nosler Partition load, the Federal 180-grain Trophy Copper load and the Fusion 180-grain stuff. Nathan Chesney also provided me with his own handloads, centered around the fantastic Nosler 190-grain Nosler AccuBond LR (Long Range). My handloads featured the 180-grain Partition and the 180-grain Swift Scirocco. All in all, a good balance of bullets that will serve the velocity and trajectory of the .300 WSM very well.

When handloading the .300 WSM, I generally prefer powders on the slower end of the burn rate, such as IMR4530, IMR 4451, Hodgdon H414 or Accurate MagPro. However, I learned a lesson in the strange art of

ballistics when Nathan told me his loads were built using Alliant’s Reloder 15, a faster burning powder.

Federal’s Fusion load – a fantastic big game bullet – shot very well, just under MOA as a matter of fact, and cruised along at 2,925 fps on the Oehler chronograph. This load would make an excellent choice for deer, elk or bear, as Federal has chemically bonded the core to the jacket for deep penetration. The Hillbilly .300 WSM didn’t like the Federal 180-grain Trophy Copper load, printing three-shot groups of right around 2-½ inches. Barrels can be funny things, after all. The Federal 180-grain Nosler Partition load worked just fine, printing just over 1-inch groups, and clocked at an even 2,950 fps. I really can’t think of a hunting situation in which you’d use a .300 WSM where the good ol’ 180-grain Partition wouldn’t be well-suited, or at least get the job done under any circumstances.

My own handloads, which used the 180-grain Partition over Accurate’s MagPro powder, produced accuracy results similar to the Federal loads but clocked a velocity of 2,930 fps. The handloaded 180-grain Swift Scirocco

II’s printed a little bit better, around ¾ of an inch, and sped along at 2,960 fps. I like the Scirocco as a good long-range load because the polymer tip and thick jacket, bonded to the lead core, will assure good weight retention. The boat tail and sleek ogive, combined with the magnum velocity, allow for a nice, flat trajectory.

In the end, it was Nathan’s own handloads that showed the rifle’s true accuracy potential. It pushes a 190-grain Nosler at 2,740 fps into groups that average just over a ½-inch at the 100-yard mark. Although the velocity dropped off a bit when compared to the 180-grainers, the higher B.C. will give the benefit of more retained energy at the farther distances. Even though Reloder 15 would generally be a powder that burns much too fast for the likes of a .300 WSM, it goes to show that great accuracy can be found with an unlikely suspect sometimes.

The recoil of the Hillbilly Custom was totally manageable, even with the combination of light weight and a stock that was 1-½ inches too short for me. The stock Model 700 trigger – tuned to perfection by Mr. Chesney – allowed for precise shot placement and



Talley rings are required equipment on a lightweight gun with heavy recoil.



Even the bolt handle is hollowed to reduce weight.

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The .300 WSM gives magnum ballistics in a short action package and has been adopted by most major ammunition manufacturers.



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SPECIFICATIONS

Model: Hillbilly Custom Rifles

Action: Bolt action

Caliber: .300 Winchester Short Magnum

Stock: Synthetic

Finish: Matte black carbon fiber barrel, black stock

Barrel: 24-in. carbon steel, 1:10 right-hand twist

Sights: None Furnished; tested with Nightforce NTX 2.5-10x42 (not included)

Magazine Capacity: Two rounds, fixed with hinged floorplate

Overall Length: 43-1/2 inches

Weight (empty): 7-1/2 lbs. (scoped)

MSRP: **\$3,400.00**

SHOOTING RESULTS

Load Name	Avg. Muzzle Velocity (fps)	Avg. 3-shot 100 yd. Group (inches)	Best 100 yd. Group (inches)
Federal Premium 180-grain Nosler Partition	2,950fps	1.10	0.90
Federal Vital Shok 180-grain Trophy Copper	2,965fps	2.50	2.10
Fusion 180-grain	2,925fps	0.95	0.90
Massaro Ballistic Laboratories 180-grain Nosler Partition (handloaded)	2,875fps	0.95	0.75
Massaro Ballistic Laboratories 180-grain Swift Scirocco II (handloaded)	2,960fps	0.80	0.70
N. Chesney ammo 190-grain Nosler AccuBond Long Range	2,740fps	0.55	0.40

Velocities measured with Oehler Model 35P chronograph 5 yards from muzzle



Classy sling swivel studs are set flush to the stock contour, and the pebbly texture of the Hillbilly Rifle gives a firm grip, even with cold hands.

good shooting technique from the bench. The light package took a while to settle down from offhand and sitting positions, but if I leaned against a tree or used a pack as a rest (like I would while hunting) the rifle was a pleasure to shoot. The Nightforce riflescopes fit the rifle as if the two were made for each other, and while it certainly isn't the lightest glass on the market, the scope made the rifle balance very well. Many times I've seen a lightweight rifle, or even just a properly balanced rifle, become an unruly mess when a riflescope of improper weight or proportion is screwed on top of the receiver.

Now, historically speaking, I've been a fan of more traditional rifles; I like walnut and blued steel, although I have embraced stainless steel and synthetic stocks. The Hillbilly Rifle is quite a large departure from any sort of traditional design, but I can totally see the places I'd use a rifle of this particular design: elk in the Rockies, deer and bear in the dark woods and steep slopes of the Adirondack Mountains, or mountain goats in British Columbia. It's a light rifle, weather proof, and more than accurate enough to make any ethical hunting shot. Hillbilly Rifles can make you a rifle just like it, or just about anything you'd like. I'm glad this rifle didn't fit me well; I won't feel as bad sending it back to Nathan. **GW**

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Nightforce Optics
NightforceOptics.com
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Federal Premium Ammunition
FederalPremium.com
(800) 379-1732

Massaro Ballistic Laboratories
MBLAmmo.com
(518) 588-8070

Nosler Bullets
Nosler.com
(800) 285-3701

Swift Bullet Company
SwiftBullets.com
(785) 754-3959

Hodgdon Powder
Hodgdon.com
(913) 362-9455

Alliant Powder
AlliantPowder.com

Talley Manufacturing
TalleyManufacturing.com
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55 YEARS of Gun World

► BY CRAIG HODGKINS

The premier issue of a magazine is important, but in many ways the second issue is the one that really counts, especially for what it represents.

Being able to produce a second issue usually means that you've sold enough copies of the first go-around to justify birthing a younger sibling, and the sophomore publication often comes with something even more exciting to the accounting department: advertising.

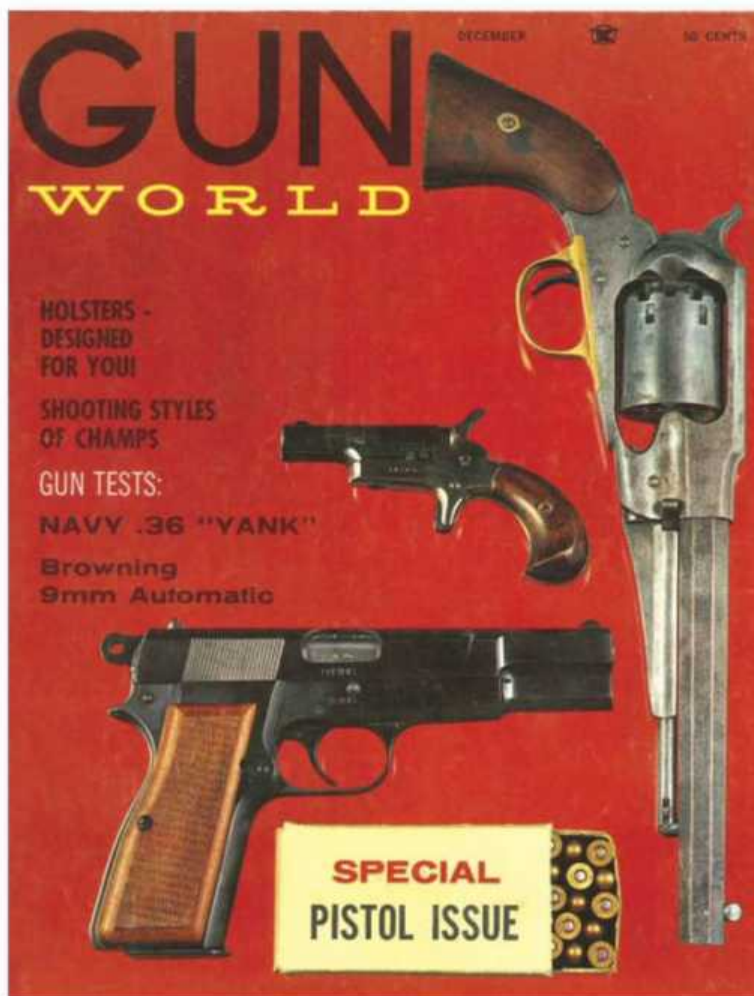
So, when Volume 1, Number 2 of *Gun World* magazine shipped off to mailboxes and newsstands just prior to December of 1960—complete with ads—the editorial and management team celebrated briefly, and then began work on issue number 3.

Our first “Scatter Shots” section featured congratulatory messages from the U.S. Army Infantry Center at Fort Benning, Georgia, and a variety of firearms manufacturers, including Remington Arms, Winchester-Western, Sturm, Ruger & Co., and Smith & Wesson.

Further in, all three cover guns were field tested, including the derringer, a style of pistol that enjoyed renewed popularity in 1960 due to its use on television programs *Have Gun Will Travel* (starring Richard Boone) and *Yancey Derringer* (with Jock Mahoney as the title character).

Mahoney, a veteran Hollywood stuntman and Western star, was kind enough to test four different derringer reproductions for the magazine and offer his opinions.

“They were not meant to be a distance weapon,” Ma-



honey kindly reminded readers with a touch of humor. “It was meant for short range shooting—like across a card table.”

Since this second installment was a “Special Pistol Issue,” John Lachuk discussed the evolution of the .44 Magnum (“This weapon has the effect of a hand-held cannon,” the sub-heading stated, “and is being made more destructive”) and offered an extended sidebar on hunting with the powerful handgun. In another feature, Jack Lewis compared the shooting styles and training regimens of three top American pistol marksmen.

That article included an interview with Marine Captain William W. McMillan, who’d just won a gold medal in the 25-meter rapid fire pistol event at the Summer Olympics in Rome. McMillan went on to compete in five Olympics, and remains the most recent American to win that event.

We may not have any gold medals, but we’re proud that readers have turned to us for 55 years. We wish we could celebrate a bit more, but it’s time to get to work on the next issue. **GW**

The cover of our December 1960 issue featured three very different pistols, including (from top) a .36 caliber Navy Arms “Yank,” a .22 Short Colt’s Derringer, and a Browning 9mm Parabellum Automatic.

Evolution Theory



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